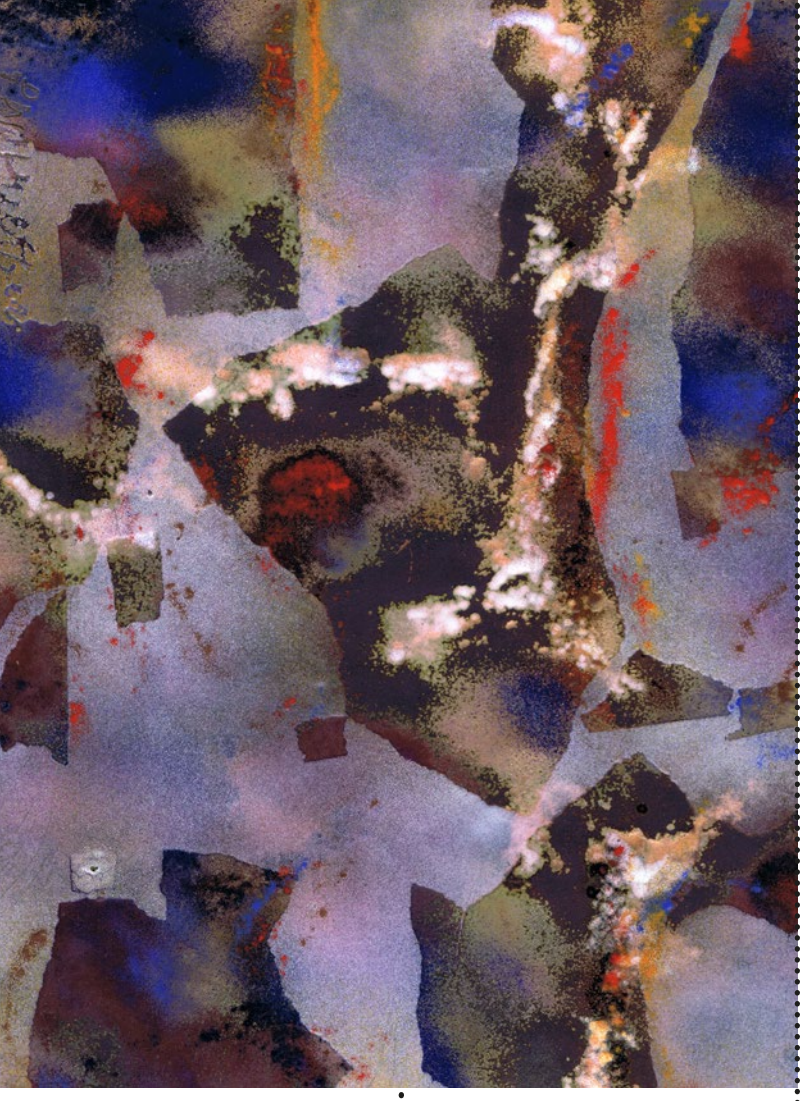

Paul Hultberg:
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Mi-Sook Hur:
Feather Trace,
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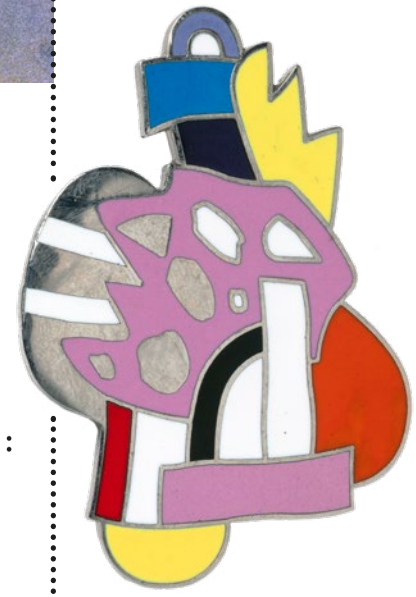

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40 YEARS

METALSMITH

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Minute grains of glass, finely ground pigment, and fire. The ancient process of enameling is not unlike alchemy. A convergence of many disparate parts fused with heat to create a unified field, a plane of enamel has metaphorical potential for the state of jewelry and metalsmithing. However, 2020 revealed that, indeed, there is no unified field when it comes to our practice. It has just been on the surface. We have some alchemy—and hard work—yet to do.

The events of 2020 amplified the realities of systemic racism, and the fact that this field is not immune to replicating the inequities of these systems and structures. For many artists, this is not a new revelation but a lived experience. Sasha Nixon explores the contrasts of some of 2020's major revelations in *Findings*. Meanwhile, *Expanding Our Vision*, a conversation between matt lambert and SNAG's 2019 Emerging Curator Grant recipient LaMar R. Gayles, merely begins to explore the rich history of Black Diaspora jewelry artists whose stories Gayles is working to amplify.

Nonetheless, this issue is a celebration of the creative possibilities and sheer beauty of enamelwork, past and present. *In Production* explores the enamel jewelry and automata of Kim Nogueira, whose works ponder the collective imagination and the interconnectedness of all things. A review of Margit Hart's book *Mindscapes* reveals the artist's use of enamel in a multifaceted conceptual practice. Mi-Sook Hur's delicate, detailed painted enamel jewelry captures the intimate, poetic possibilities of this expressive medium.

We also recognize major contributions to the field, starting with a celebration of Eleanor Moty, recipient of the 2019 *Lifetime Achievement Award*, by her friend and long-time supporter Helen W. Drutt English. Jamie Bennett reviews the first publication to delve deeply into the life and work of pioneering enamelist June Schwarcz. Similarly, Alan Rosenberg's feature *Abstract Expressionist Enamelist* gives readers an overview of Paul Hultberg's boundary-pushing career. Alison Krier explores the colorful enameled jewelry produced by ACME Studios, which carry the wit, delight, and artfulness of the Italian design groups Memphis Milano and Studio Alchimia.

For possibly the first time ever, this issue of *Metalsmith* has no exhibition reviews. This is due in part to timing but also to the major pauses and shifts in how artists are presenting their works amidst pandemic constraints. However, this presented an opportunity to take stock in a moment when virtual exhibitions are the new normal. You'll see reviews again in coming issues.

What a milestone fortieth year this has been for *Metalsmith*. I began this year reflecting on *Metalsmith's* origins. As the year comes to a close, I am trying to envision its future, as I am sure you are as well. If this year, fraught with challenges and tragedies, has amplified anything, it is that time is short and precious—but that as artists we will and must continue to create. And like that plane of enamel, I dream of a future that illuminates the whole. But it must be a collective endeavor. Please, dream with me: editor@snagmetalsmith.org

—Adriane Dalton, Editor

The mission of *Metalsmith* is to explore, analyze, promote, and document excellence and innovation in the field of jewelry and metalsmithing. In achieving this goal, SNAG will produce and oversee the direction and content of a publication that will serve as a significant resource for the metalsmithing field. The editorial content of *Metalsmith* will emphasize contemporary activities, makers, and ideas and incorporate supportive content, relevant critical issues, and the exchange of viewpoints.

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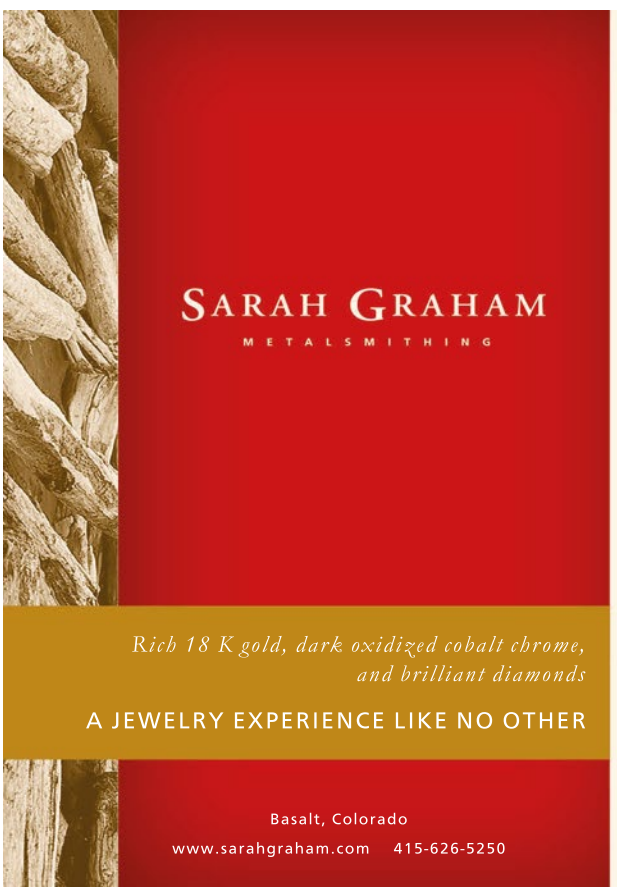

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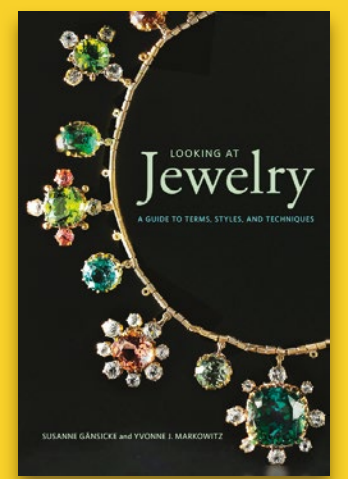

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A Guide to Terms, Styles, and Techniques

Susanne Gänsicke and Yvonne J. Markowitz

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Photo: Anthony McLean

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Red, pendant, 2020
Laser sintered and fabricated silver, acrylic cord
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Yingqi Puffy Zhao – MFA 2020
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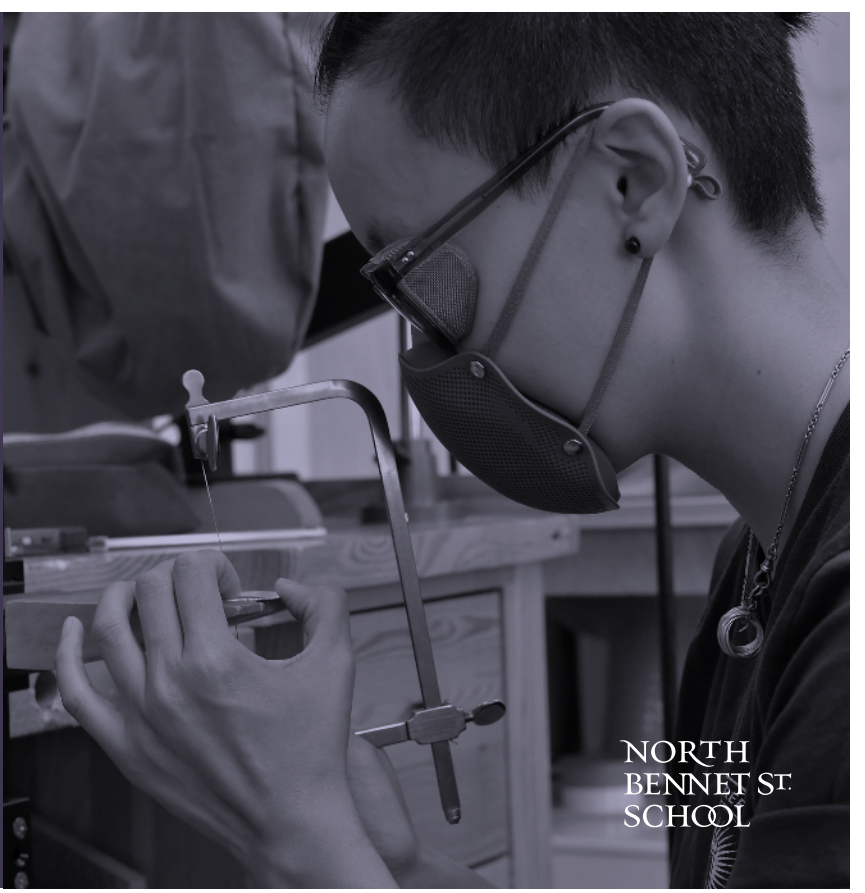

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A CALL TO ACTION

BY SASHA NIXON

What is a call to action? A call to use the amplifying power of a collective act to bring about change. A call to use the incredible power of physical acts and apply our minds to molding our world anew.

FIRST, WE WERE MANDATED TO STAY HOME. It was a call to *inaction* intended to safeguard our physical wellbeing. During that time, our digital community evolved and thrived through creative thinking.

In the beginning, I felt a sense of surrealism and loss. I was part of a profound collective grief as everyone reacted to the disappearance of what had been the status quo, a million small acts and choices that were taken for granted in our lives. I grieved for the world that was forever lost. Within this transformative event, however, I felt hope for the potential of new paradigms to emerge that the uncompromising rules of the old order would not have allowed.

After the initial shock, institutions, galleries, and individuals combated the isolating effects of quarantine by offering online artist talks, interviews, and discussions as a way to maintain connection and community. These efforts have been centered primarily on artists outside of the United States. Bella Neyman, co-founder of New York City Jewelry Week (NYCJW), attributes this in part to COVID-19 first reaching critical levels outside of the United States—and in part to Americans' inability to rest.

NYCJW has been hosting several series as part of their Instagram stories, including "Checking In!" This series started as conversations with artists about how they were coping with the quarantine, and evolved into a lively interactive space that is at once happy hour, craft time, business advice, and emotional balm.[1]

Art Jewelry Forum (AJF) has hosted a series of talks on Zoom entitled "AJF Live Chat," which has included talks with artists and gallerists, and studio visits. The first few installments spotlighted AJF Young Artist Award winner MJ Tyson and finalists Junmin Bae, Ryungjae Jung, Lore Langendries, and Mallory Weston.[2]

American Craft Council (ACC) has had a constant stream of artist studio visits and information on their Instagram stories, including "Maker x Maker," in which craftspeople spotlight their favorite colleagues.[3]

Museums worldwide have been promoting the online presence of their jewelry collections. A list compiled by Alejandra Salinas for AJF lists twenty-three institutions with online collections that have a strong jewelry or metals focus.[4] In addition to promoting their permanent collections, some museums focused on educational opportunities. The Museum of Arts and Design's (MAD) weekly "In the Loupe" Zoom webinar provides an opportunity for MAD patrons to connect with the contributors to the exhibition *45 Stories in Jewelry: 1947 to Now*, which went on view just before MAD closed its doors. One can visit the exhibition once the museum opens, but this series provides a unique opportunity for artists and authors to elaborate on artwork, creative practices, and relationships that might not have been possible under normal circumstances.

With the cessation of the personal visit, other museums and galleries have pivoted to online exhibitions. The Metal Museum encouraged public interaction with their collection by initiating its first crowd-curated show, *It Takes a Village*, which opened in September 2020 and comprises thirty works from its permanent collection. Gallery Loupe curated *One World / 40 Artists Respond to COVID-19: An online exhibition*, which is accompanied by a digital publication illuminating each artist's experiences with the pandemic as expressed in their work.[5] Though they lack the tactility and weight of encountering three-dimensional objects in person, online exhibitions are a way for artists to continue promoting their practices and for the metals community to keep discovering and exploring new work.

A host of smaller institutions have also been creating Zoom content. GemX, though small, attracts the most viewers, with approximately 500 to 1,000 attendees per session; their popularity drew attention from *The New York Times*. GemX provides a wealth of weekly talks with researchers on a variety of jewelry and fashion related topics. The Jewelry Library, in collaboration with the Women's Jewelry Association, put together a series on women shaping the field of jewelry; and Stove Works has hosted weekly Zoom discussions with artists.

Due to the breadth and depth of these digital responses, the jewelry community is in some ways more connected than ever before. More people can now attend a plethora of events and consume content

than would have been possible with in-person events. This is especially true for attendees who do not live in urban areas. COVID-19 has, in effect, geographically democratized the jewelry community.

At times, in fact, there appear to be so many events that one can feel exhausted and overwhelmed. As at Munich Jewelry Week, it is impossible to attend and keep track of everything, even from the comfort of our own living rooms. The previously established barriers between work, consuming social and educational content, and relaxation blend into each other until it becomes difficult to compartmentalize, not least because they were all now mediated through a single screen in a single location.

It is important to acknowledge that we continue to grapple with the loss of routines that had sustained us every day. As we adjust to the new normal, the enormity of the changes we are going through needs to be honored, and we need to treat ourselves and others with reverence and care. Everyone is fighting the exhaustion that threatens to pull resilience and creativity into the void.

Georgina Treviño
*F**ck The Police*
(in progress), 2020
Sterling silver, piercings, cubic zirconia earrings
Photo by the artist

THEN, WE WERE *CALLED TO ACTION* IN MAY. Black civil rights reached a boiling point after the tragic killing of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer. People left their homes to protest. The first step beyond the front door, overlooked before quarantine, became the first of many courageous acts taken to join together as a greater collective voice. No longer just about the pandemic, quarantine was rightly redefined to encompass the passion of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) voices who joined together in protest of a deeply unfair American system. Within the context of quarantine, artists across the country used their work and online presence to amplify the cause, employing social media platforms to bring Black artists to the foreground and create new pieces that speak to the civil climate. Artists held auctions on Instagram to donate funds to groups such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), local and national bail funds, and Crafting the Future, among others.

There are far too many examples of protest jewelry, both past and present, to list here, so I have selected two works from different eras that resonate with each other and might put into perspective the timeless persistence of an immovable object in the face of an unstoppable force.

Jeweler Georgina Treviño created *F**ck The Police* to auction on Instagram in support of Black Lives Matter. The brass pin is shaped like an iconic sheriff's star, which was cut from flat sheet, allowing Treviño to pierce each point with large cubic zirconia stud earrings and golden hoops. The center of the piece is filled with engraved lettering: it reads "Fuck the Police" surrounded by scrawled lettering repeating chants from BLM protests. The powerful language makes Treviño's piece a product of its time, adopting protest

phrases and the cries of the victims of police brutality. The words undermine the shape of the badge and give power to the resistance, suggesting the iconic star as something corrupt.

Treviño's work recalls a 1969 piece by jewelry artist William Clark. He created the brooch *Police State Badge*, now in MAD's collection, in protest to police brutality carried out during the marches against the Vietnam War. Also in the iconic style of an old Western sheriff's star badge, it is made of silver and gold, and the words "Police State" are writ large across the front in print, reminiscent of stenciled spray-painted police barricades and military uniforms. The familiar icon that signals an enforcer of civic peace contrasts harshly with the words that signal an abuse of that enforcement. Realizing the parallels both narratively and aesthetically between the Clark and Treviño pieces, Barbara Paris Gifford, Associate Curator of MAD, purchased the Treviño brooch, as an example of the continuation of rebellion against the police in the US to donate to BLM and MAD's collection. Gestures like this acknowledge the gravity of what is currently happening, and its place within the deeper history of civil rights within this country.

Activism through works like these speaks to the resilience of creativity. Before the protests began, Treviño worked on a series of pieces titled "COVID-19 Collab." Each work was completed in collaboration with a different artist. Treviño cultivated her own experience to find fulfillment and connection in her post COVID-19 world. Once the protests began, she shifted her focus and created an emotional outlet in crafting a work of art that would at once convey a message and allow her to help her chosen cause. That is all that we can hope to do as artists and individuals: find meaning and connection in adversity, and rise up to help with the tools that we have.

Institutions and groups have lent their voices to the uprising. Some have used their digital platforms and listservs to promote BLM, and Black artists and their work. Others have gone further. NYCJW's new initiative, *Here We Are*, supports and encourages the growing diversity and variety of perspectives within the field. The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) has created the Art Smith Memorial Scholarship Fund, the goal of which is to create scholarships and mentorships in support of Black students attending FIT's Jewelry Design program.[6]

During this tumultuous time, we are applying ourselves to adapt and form our new world, one that melds digital connection and physical immediacy. This manifestation of collective loss and anger in protests and vigils is evidence that the established system continues to fail our Black community. This fact remains painfully relevant in the metals field. It is also true that it is not a Black problem to fix. If white people refuse to acknowledge and address the systematic racism within art and art history, the problem is perpetuated. It is the failure of white people to contribute meaningful change within our own fields of influence that has led to the need for mass protests advocating for social change.

Sasha Nixon is an independent curator, jewelry historian, and metalsmith. She is a member of the Museum of Arts and Design's Exhibition Design and Installation team and a critic at the Rhode Island School of Design. She was awarded the 2017 Society of North American Goldsmiths' Emerging Curators Grant.

William Clark
Police State Badge, 1969
Sterling silver, 14k gold
Courtesy of the Museum of Arts and Design; gift of Diane Kuhn, 2012
Photo: Bruce White

Georgina Treviño
*F**ck The Police*, 2020
Sterling silver, piercings, cubic zirconia earrings
Photo by the artist

1 @nycjewelryweek / **2** @artjewelryforum; www.artjewelryforum.org / **3** craftcouncil.org / **4** Alejandra Salinas, "Museums with Online Jewelry Collections," Art Jewelry Forum, 4/27/2020. https://artjewelryforum.org/museums-with-online-jewelry-collections / **5** https://galleryloupe.com/exhibitions/97 / **6** For more information, or to donate, contact randi@forfuturereference.com

KIM NOGUEIRA: CRAFTING DREAMSCAPES

BY ANDREA DINOTO

Axis Mundi (necklace), 2019
Silver, copper, 24k gold, vitreous enamel
20 x 1¾ x ¾ in.
Photo: William Stelzer

KIM NOGUEIRA OFTEN BEGINS THE DAY with a meditative walk on the beach on St. John, the smallest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, where she's lived since 1993. "I came here on vacation with a boyfriend and never left," she says. She abandoned her native New England for what ultimately became an "interior journey of unlearning," focusing, she says, on "the extraordinary interconnectedness of all things in this universe…of marvels and oddities, astonishments and magnificence." Over two decades, in the course of her spiritual journey, Nogueira discovered her true calling as an art jeweler, enamelist, and automatist.

A professed longtime collector of "antiques, books, Victorian oddments, and gum-ball toys," Nogueira graduated from Smith College in 1990 with a degree in sociology but no thought of pursuing a life in art. On St. John, she worked at various part-time jobs, including spa and pool maintenance, and once briefly considered a career as a minister licensed to marry people on the island. She had a son, Xavier, born in 1995. A few years later a friend recommended her to local goldsmiths Rudy and Irene Patton, owners of the jewelry store R&I Patton. "They trained me in the bench basics of metalsmithing, and I stayed," she says, "learning the craft and the business for sixteen years." She left in 2015 to concentrate on developing what has become a distinctive mythopoetic aesthetic based on imagery and text reflective of her collecting passions and humanist concerns, "sourced on the Internet," she says, "from the historical record."

As an enamelist, Nogueira says, "I intuitively craft a dreamlike visual language in glass and metal…that speaks to the collective unconscious we all share." Her series *East of Hercules* (2018) features semiotic compositions comprised of tiny sepia-toned images—the residue color of iron-oxide transfers—which float on a white ground framed in gold, silver, or copper. A single word, phrase, or image—HOCUS POCUS; a comical Tin Man; a detail from a Renaissance painting—can dominate, say, a ring or a brooch, while an assemblage may occupy a single bead, or run like a surreal film strip around a formidable bangle bracelet.

Prayer Box for Mother Earth
(pendant/automaton), 2014
Silver, 24k gold,
bronze, stainless steel,
vitreous enamel
3½ x 1¾ x 1 in.
Photo by the artist

For automata, Nogueira draws as well on text and imagery in the creation of whimsical, often wearable mechanical objects. She was first drawn to the form in 2011 as a response to the tragic death of her son's father. While reading Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with Xavier, she was inspired to construct—not very well, she admits—an automaton embossed with the book's epigraph, a quote from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: *Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay/To mould me Man, did I solicit thee/From darkness to promote me?*

"In hindsight," she says, "I see now I was beginning to explore age-old questions on the nature of consciousness: What is this life, this sentience, that 'automates' not only us but the astonishing assortment of other beings in our earthly biosphere?"

Through intensive study Nogueira taught herself the complexities of automata construction, producing pieces that range from a fortune-telling locket—*The Augur's Daughter*—to a mini theater's proscenium arch—*Escape from the River Lethe*—in which, at the turn of a tiny silver crank, a woman appears to float in waves, a beguiling moment reminiscent of a magic lantern show. Similarly, magic is afoot in a vending-machine pendant, *A Prayer Box for Mother Earth*, when a tiny magician is made to pull a golden heart from a box, symbolizing, says Nogueira, "hope and love for the planet." In 2018, three of Nogueira's automatons, including *Lethe*, were included in *le genie des image*, a curated exhibition in Paris at Galerie La Joaillerie par Mazlo; and in 2020 she was one of twelve featured artists in the Morris Museum's *A Cache of Kinetic Art: Tiny Intricacies* (ongoing through 2021), in Morristown, New Jersey.

Nogueira's intriguing work has been included in numerous publications, museum shops, and group exhibitions, internationally and online, many of which she's accessed by responding to calls for entry on various gallery and museum websites. In 2019 she was invited to participate in *LOOT: MAD about Jewelry*, recently renamed *MAD About Jewelry*, at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York. "At fifty-two, it was my first major show," she says, for which she created an extraordinary, ten-bead statement necklace, *Axis Mundi* (between heaven and earth). The piece is from the *East of Hercules* series, the name a quote from *Teaching a Stone to Talk* by poet Annie Dillard. The interior surface of each two-part "beignet" bead (beignets being the pillow-shaped New Orleans pastry) are lined in gold foil, representing, she says, "ourselves as spiritual beings having a human experience. I truly expected to take it home and hang it on my wall as a talisman," she says, "and when it sold, I started sobbing."

On her website, Nogueira writes eloquently about her work, even including a poem or quote with each of her on-offer production pieces. ("I do this to deepen persons' experience of themselves," she says.) Posting on Instagram garners orders, she says, as well as interest in her lushly inhabited island world, from which she departs through the year to attend workshops in advanced metalwork techniques, such as cloisonné with Merry-Lee Rae at Arrowmont School of Craft in Tennessee; hinges and mechanisms with Pat Flynn, and enameling with Harlan Butt, both at Metalwerx, in Massachusetts. A planned course in gemstone carving at the Trier University of Applied Science International Summer Academy in Idar-Oberstein, Germany, was rescheduled due to COVID-19 precautions.

Kim Nogueira (right) at *LOOT: MAD About Jewelry* 2019, Museum of Arts and Design.

Photo: Jenna Bascom

During the spring and summer of 2020, with so many art venues closed and the future seemingly on hold, Nogueira was treating herself to "studio enrichment of the metaphysical variety," she said. "During these last four months I took a seven-week online class with a shaman, a month-long online meditation retreat, and a three-hour seminar on angels. And yes," she added, on the phone from St. John, "I do work in my bathing suit, every day."

https://www.kimnogueira.com

Andrea DiNoto writes on art, craft, and design.

EXPANDING OUR VISION: A CONVERSATION ABOUT BLACK JEWELERS WITH EMERGING CURATOR LAMAR R. GAYLES

BY MATT LAMBERT

WALKING INTO *CONJURING BLACK HISTORIES IN JEWELRY*, an exhibition of Black jewelers at South Side Community Art Center in Chicago curated by 2019 SNAG Emerging Curator Grant recipient LaMar R. Gayles, was a complex experience. I was elated that I was finally able to see Winifred Mason Chenet's work in person. Chenet is cited as a possible mentor to well-known mid-century jeweler Art Smith, one of the few Black artists to be featured in this magazine[1], and someone on whom I have scoured the Internet for more scholarship.

But my elation at seeing this exhibition was tempered by a deep sense of frustration. Why have works by these Black makers been harder for me to access and research? Where are these makers in books and publications, such as this one, meant to document the history of contemporary jewelry and metalsmithing?

On the day I visited, I met Karen Joy, who both had works in a small pop-up jewelry sale and on view in the exhibition. Joy told me about the community centers and independently run studio schools where she learned to make jewelry; venues that have been largely overlooked and undocumented in the broader field. For many independent schools and non-academic centers, she said, the concern is not about recordkeeping and archiving, but rather keeping the lights on and the doors open. For the most part, the archive lives in the memory and narrative of those involved.

Letting history sit only within institutions with the resources to maintain an archive is an exercise of privilege, as I later discussed with Gayles. Our discussion touches only on a few of the many underrepresented makers that have not been given consideration in these glossy pages. The intention of this conversation is to begin to peel back a thin layer of a very large landscape, in order to inspire others to also have a look and to continue to examine neglected people and spaces.

The work and the knowledge of long-time makers like Karen Joy, who are thriving outside of a white-dominated historical canon as it is represented in academia and in publications, serve as an alert that histories are on a precipice. As narratives go unrecorded, the stories that contribute to a more comprehensive image of American jewelry are in danger. Thinking of what already has been lost is a thought that keeps me up at night. The conversation that follows, and the works presented in the following pages, is but a small fraction of a horizon that more people should be looking toward.

Russell Ferrell
Three Brooches, 1980s-90s
Mixed metals,
semi-precious stones
3 x 3½ in. (each)
Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Photo: Julian A. Graham

A Philadelphia native, Russell Ferrell was known for his breathtaking jewelry expressing Afrocentric aesthetic concepts. The pieces at left and center are profile portraits of Black females composed out of brass wire, and a small onyx stone bezel set in the bottom piece. Ferrell showcased his works at fine arts and crafts fairs in Philadelphia's historic Head-House Square, and owned his own jewelry store the Odd Shop. Ferrell died in 2017.

opposite (left to right):
Winifred Mason-Chenet

Vèvè Brooch, ca. 1950s-60s
Copper, brass
1¾ x 1¾ in.

Mami Wata Brooch, 1950s-60s
Silver, pewter
1 x 1 in.

Abstract Pewter Pendants,
ca. 1950s-60s
Pewter
3 x 2 in. (each)

Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Photo: Julian A. Graham

The two brooches were created by Winifred Mason-Chenet, attributed as the earliest Black American jeweler to present work on an international scale. These examples draw aesthetic inspiration from motifs she encountered while studying and living in Haiti, where she established her practice and gained international recognition. The abstract, geometric arrays in the *Vèvè Brooch* are based on a Haitian religious symbol, known as a *vèvè*, meant to evoke the divine essences of Haitian deities called *loa*. The *Mami Wata Brooch* showcases Mason-Chenet's interest in interest in a mermaid-like figure, called Mami Wata, a deity who appears throughout West Africa in various traditions as well in practices within Black groups in the Americas—more specifically the Caribbean.

matt lambert: What made you start researching these makers and putting together *Conjuring Black Histories in Jewelry*?
LaMar R. Gayles: When I was a little boy, my great grandmother would always show me her jewelry collection. It was filled with a lot of commercial jewelers, but there were a few examples of jewelers from the Black diaspora, like the famed designer Coreen Simpson, who made the *Black Cameos*. During my first year of college, my grandmother passed; her memory truly is what inspired me to begin researching Black jewelers. As I began, I saw a large gap in the canon of jewelry. I am still working to document Black jewelry makers and metalworkers from as early as the colonial Americas. When I saw SNAG's grant—the only one in the world—for student curators and jewelry historians, I knew I had to apply. I focused on bringing forth an exhibition that expresses the research I have uncovered over my now five years of investigation.

What is it about the specific pieces you chose to exhibit? Why these particular makers?
The makers are all from the mid-twentieth century onward. The works allow for a broad survey of this time period, when cultural workers, artists, musicians, and various thinkers were redefining Black identity in the Americas as a pluralistic, pan-national concept. The earliest work in the exhibition is by Winifred Mason Chenet, the earliest noted Black female jeweler in the U.S., who was active in the 1940s–60s. The exhibition connects the emergence of varying Black aesthetics in metal and/or jewelry around the country. The makers all have a crucial role in the canon of Black jewelry because their various oeuvres reveal a multitude of aesthetic forms unique to these artists, yet sometimes techniques, materials, and or concepts are held in common. Many of the artists in the exhibition I uncovered by reading texts on African American art, researching archives related to Black art production like the South Side Community Art Center in Chicago, and interviewing living Black jewelers like Jimmy Jones, Karen Joy, and EJ Montgomery.

Where do you look when researching makers who are not represented in the primary canons and archives of American jewelry and metalsmithing?
To be honest, I look everywhere everyone else does, I hope. Reviewing worldcat.org for new materials coming out, looking at art databases for names and practices, and even typing "Black Jewelry" into Google Scholar. There I find blog articles on individual artists, and individual scholars who utilize virtual space to disseminate information about artists in a broad way, but it is very anecdotal and not a lot of specific references. When I was stalled in my research into specific locations, tapping into the living networks of makers in those areas was crucial. These artists often know some of their elders, or at least might know another place to look. Often these living makers are elders themselves. In many ways, a living subject's memories are the only records available of certain jewelry canons.

Faith Davis
Necklace, 2018
Onyx, silver, natural cord
6 x 1¾ in.
Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Photo: Julian A. Graham

Faith Davis grew up amidst the political energy of Chicago's South Side during the 1960s. Her artwork, which is intentionally abstract, is influenced by the structural elements of the city's architecture. Davis earned a BFA in metalsmithing and jewelry in 1978 from East Carolina University. She built a successful jewelry production and design studio on the South Side of Chicago, and exhibits throughout the country.

Jimmy Jones is a self-taught Chicago artist creating assemblage jewelry and sculpture. Jones always created three-dimensional work, but at the age of thirty-five, in a course at a parks and recreation center, he decided to delve into the realm of art practice. He has showcased work nationwide at various art exhibitions, fairs, and shows. His work utilizes repurposed sheet metal and found objects to create brilliantly structured geometric compositions.

Jimmy Jones
Brooch, 2018
Mixed metals, semi-precious stones
3½ x 2 in.
Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Photo: Julian A. Graham

Karen Smith
Brooch, 2020
Silver, copper, jasper
4 x 3½ in.
Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Photo: Julian A. Graham

Based in Oakland, California, Karen Smith is mainly self-taught, but has attended workshops and apprenticed under master metalsmiths in Dakar, Senegal. Smith's aesthetic blends finely crafted smaller components together into individual pieces which all consider movement and many consider Black aesthetics. In this brooch she directly draws from the broad masking traditions practiced throughout Africa, creating her own rendition of a mask. Smith's work brings attention to the transnational impulses which fuel Black jewelry. In addition, Smith is the founder of We Wield the Hammer, a new organization teaching metalsmithing to young Black girls in Oakland.

Alicia Goodwin
Brooch, 20119
Sterling silver, brass, chalcedony
2½ x 3½ in.
Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Photo: Julian A. Graham

Chicago-born jeweler Alicia Goodwin creates objects combining personal and culturally meaningful imagery with a bold, yet refined aesthetic. For over a decade, she worked in New York City under different jewelers and jewelry organizations. She now makes work under her own brand Lingua Nigra. This brooch is composed from a cast made from a cuttlefish skeleton and a bezel set chalcedony cabochon.

Is there a Black jewelry aesthetic?
Heh. There *are* Black aesthetics, yes. However, there is no *one* set of Black aesthetics. Just like cultural identity, aesthetics comes from a pluralistic and individualistic understanding of a set of practices which might mirror or be similar to others, but is usually not exactly the same. Famed art scholar Halima Taha, who wrote *Collecting Black Art*, talks about a lack of defining Black aesthetics in visual arts in the twentieth century, due to a belief that some of the imagery was subversive. That said, a lot of scholarship continues to have gaps related to Black aesthetics in visual and material culture, and often having to borrow from aesthetic studies in literature, film, music, or theatre. I define Black aesthetics in visual culture as any object made by a Black maker. Sometimes these objects might reflect cultural motifs or imagery from historical African cultures or even Black slave traditions.

I know we have talked and referenced in our meetings how jewelry has been and is sometimes divided (contemporary, ethnic, indigenous).[2] What does the creation/presence of these divisions do in present-day discourse?
We see many diverse bodies of work made by Black artists because their work is often made to occupy different spaces, different bodies, and different social scenes. Some makers create objects that reflect direct aesthetic considerations to appeal to their Afrocentric clientele, but some who were trained in academic metals programs reflect skills and visual considerations from American and global contemporary and historical jewelry.
The creation of these divisive, and honestly racist, categorical taxonomies has led to most Black jewelers working to distance their work from categories, because then their work would become prejudged and excluded from the broader category of contemporary jewelry, even though artists can operate in multiple realms. Often today's makers from marginalized backgrounds become isolated into these groupings like "ethnic" or "cultural" before their work is even made. This has led to a great number of makers wanting to be seen as an artist who is Black versus a Black artist; the latter suggests that the maker's work is only for a specific group and maybe not a broader audience.

What elements are important in archiving information that you wish you had seen more of in your research?
Begin to think about important sources of inspiration in your work, and discuss those with your clients, family and friends. Please think of ways to sign and note your work. It has been difficult to note jewelers who have no hallmarks or artist's signature; without these we have relied on materiality, stylistic, technical, and provenance analyses to derive objects' origins.

What advice do you have for makers and researchers working to see themselves in the discourse?
Visit local estate sales, especially if you are in or have access to rural places which might not often be thought about in the mainstream scene. Look into any maker or tradition that interests you: even if something is written, there is always something new to say. However, always be bold and audacious in all of your research endeavors, as tenacity and assertiveness can often yield really fruitful results in historical research. Finally and most importantly, do not be afraid or feel the need to hoard your research. We all learn from each other, and the only way to expand current knowledge is to present histories and continue to build our understanding of them as scholarship expands.

Jean Baptiste Pericles
Wandering Figure, 1960s–70s
Brass, copper
Charm: 4 x 3 in.
Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Image courtesy of Mercy Garriga

Jean Baptiste Pericles was an artist working in Haiti at the time of Winifred Mason-Chenet's workshop. Newspaper articles from the 1950s note that Mason-Chenet had assistants in the shop with whom she left most of her designs and motifs once she left the country following the assassination of her husband. Pericles established his jewelry house in the 1960s and became one of the notable Haitian jewelers of the 20th century. His early work drew from designs learned while assisting Mason-Chenet, but he developed his own aesthetic over time. *Wandering Figure* illustrates the persistence of various aesthetic motifs from historical Africa in the creative cultural mimesis of Blacks throughout the Americas. We see an example of how Pericles appealed to American markets coming to Haiti in the 1960s-90s by crafting moving figures evoking the figural traditions of Haitian and historical Kingdom of Kongo objects.

Karen Joy
Mar Mar, 2019
Silver, gold plated copper, labradorite, paraiba quartz
3 x 3½ in.
Collection of LaMar R. Gayles
Photo: Julian A. Graham

Born in Chicago, artist and jeweler Karen Joy worked as an art director, graphic designer, and photographer for twenty years before turning to jewelry in 1998. Joy trained with Chicago jewelers such as Boris Popovich and William Farnis, and has furthered her practice through study at the Penland School of Craft, Revere Academy of Jewelry, and with an Italian goldsmith. Joy often takes a figurative approach to jewelry, as seen in *Mar Mar*, a piece made in reference to the subject's childhood nickname.

LaMar R. Gayles is an art, craft, and design historian, archaeo(gem)ologist, and jeweler who specializes in utilizing artistic experiential practices, experimental archaeology, and historical reproduction as modes of understanding visual rhetoric and artifacts from the past. He is a recent graduate of St. Olaf College, and is currently enrolled in University of Illinois at Chicago's Museum and Exhibition Studies program (MUSE). He is also the Executive Director of Union Street Gallery, a multivalent Southland area non-profit arts organization in Chicago Heights.

matt lambert is a non-binary, trans, multidisciplinary collaborator and co-conspirator working towards equity, inclusion, and reparation. They are a co-founder and facilitator of The Fulcrum Project and currently are a PhD student between Konstfack and University of Gothenburg in Sweden. They hold a MA in Critical Craft Studies from Warren Wilson and an MFA in Metalsmithing from Cranbrook Academy of Art.

1 Art Smith is one of the few Black artists who appears in accessible publications and is also mentioned as being Black. / **2** A clear example of how jewelry is sometimes divided is seen in Oppi Untracht's jewelry mandala, which is viewable in Utrecht's text *Jewelry Concepts and Technology.* The mandala is often referenced and circulated and can also be found through most search engines. Oppi Untracht, *Jewelry Concepts and Technology /Oppi Untracht* (London: Robert Hale, 1987).

THE ARTIST, JUNE SCHWARCZ

BY JAMIE BENNETT

June Schwarcz: Artist in Glass and Metal
By Enamel Arts Foundation, Bernard N. Jazzar and Harold B. Nelson
Lucia Marquand, 2019
328 pages, $60 U.S.

JUNE SCHWARCZ LOVED THE IDEA of being an artist; she treated it as an adventure. Her curiosity, inquisitiveness, and independence marked everything she made. All of her pieces pivoted around an idea of wandering into the unexplored. She triumphed as an abstract artist working with enamel on copper formed vessels and wall reliefs. Authors Bernard Jazzar and Harold Nelson take us into her space, and introduce us to the vigor, variety and inventiveness that characterized her considerable output.

The painstaking gathering, organizing, and interpreting of more than sixty years of material must have been a daunting task for Jazzar and Nelson. They had, however, set the stage for this book with two prior publications on enameling, *Painting With Fire and Little Dreams in Glass and Metal*, as well as the catalog *June Schwarcz, Inventions and Variations* for the Renwick Gallery. The authors come with further credentials and authority as the founders of the Enamel Arts Foundation in Los Angeles, which holds hundreds of enamel works in its collection. Their scholarship, knowledge, and commitment to the enamel field is evident in how well they represent it.

It is obvious as one reads through the chapters that the authors believed in the art of June Schwarcz and dedicated themselves to producing an unparalleled book on a modern enamelist and metalsmith. They expertly merge historical context and her individual accomplishments. To my knowledge, there is no other book on a modern metalsmith, enamelist, or jeweler for that matter, which documents the consequence of a near complete life's body of work so thoroughly. In doing so, the authors present an eloquent picture of June Schwarcz's invention and virtuosity.

Schwarcz was a major contributor in defining twentieth-century enameling and in turn crafts. She interrupted and intervened with the conventions of making in both enameling and metalwork. This book establishes and documents her place in history and the importance of her contributions.

While the book proceeds chronologically, beginning with "the early years," the authors cut across events and dates, engaging the shifts and poignancy in specific bodies of work. As the decades progress, subtexts of significant markers charting Schwarcz's path creatively and professionally develop. "Broadening Horizons: The Seventies," "Honors and Awards: 1980–2000," and "Influence and Inspiration": These milestones are further delineated within the chapters by particular processes and techniques, form language, references, and events.

The authors establish the importance of particular processes in Schwarcz's work, beginning with a chapter on *bassetaille*, a process in which engraved and marked metal surfaces are reflective below transparent enamel. However, as they chart the progression of several processes in her body of work, they simultaneously record the unpredictable outcome of her explorations. What is so consequential in this thorough documentation of Schwarcz's oeuvre is the details. The authors go to great length in providing striking full-page images of the work, accompanied by specific descriptions of the particular methods in enameling and metalwork used. Significantly, beyond the "how" of making, they carefully construct the "why" and "what for."

In such a prodigious book, one would expect beautiful plates, persuasive descriptions, and an exhaustive biography, and without question all are generously provided here. What one does not always get or particularly

Vessel, 2003
Electroplated copper foil, enamel
10¼ x 5 in.
Collection of the Enamel Arts Foundation, Los Angeles
Photo: Jairo Ramirez

expect, however, is a clear articulation of the artist's contribution and consequence to the progress of a particular art form. Jazzar and Nelson thoughtfully expose Schwarcz's ability to generate a body of work that manages to be resolutely her own, that expresses her own values and beliefs. They chart her creative path and make it clear that she goes beyond what she knows, anticipating what is ahead and what it might generate. Along the way they point out her unabated quest to find new methods and forms of expression.

The accent of the artist's reputation and fame is not the point of this book; what we learn is the extraordinary commitment Schwarcz has made; how she fuses a labor-intensive process with personal reflection to construct evocative forms.

We learn that Schwarcz's agency and ability to transform ideas into one poignant object after another is generated by her deployment of personal experiences and cultural preoccupations. Her fascination not with fashion but with clothing fabrication, with architectural detail and structure, rather than style, are but a few examples of resources harnessed by Schwarcz.

Carefully balanced in the text are the benchmarks in Schwarcz's career; we see the conferences (the 1961 American Craft Council "Research In Crafts" conference in Seattle); critically important exhibitions (*Objects: USA*, in 1969); meeting and befriending people like Sam Maloof, Kenneth Bates, and Peter Voulkos; and symposiums (The Great Western Enameling Symposium, 1981–1983) all of which had an impact on Schwarcz. Brought to light as well are the numerous transformative inventions and contributions she has made to enameling and in turn the arts, particularly the creation of a fresh vocabulary of color and form in metal vessels. Making and remaking, we see how she builds, unbuilds, rejects and replenishes all as a part of her process. The authors take us into her studio and home and reflect on what makes an artist like Schwarcz so persuasively inspiring. It is the grounding of this book: for the reader to come to understand or at least think about a genuinely creative person like June Schwarcz.

Jamie Bennett is an artist living in High Falls, NY.

Dancer, 2001
Electroplated copper foil, enamel
8 x 9 x 10 in.
Collection of the Enamel Arts Foundation, Los Angeles
Photo: Jairo Ramirez

SHADOW & SUBSTANCE

BY ANDREA DINOTO

Schattenflug, 2013
Fine art print on Hahnemühle paper
40 x 50 cm

What is precious?
What is permanent and durable?
What changes over time?
What is beautiful?

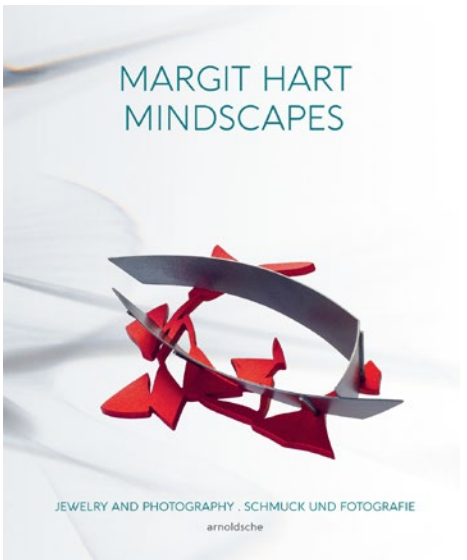
THE VIENNESE JEWELER-PHOTOGRAPHER MARGIT HART opens her book with these evocative questions. Each speaks both to her process as an artist and to her interest in establishing a dialogue—visual and intellectual—with herself, and by extension, the reader-viewer. Hart presents her titular "mindscape" through intriguing objects in various media, constructions, and colors, coupled with her own abstract black-and-white photos that play with light and shadow. The work is strikingly diverse, consisting of constructed jewelry objects, mainly brooches, each distinctly different-yet-related.

Sixteen jewelry collections, ranging from volumetric to painterly, are presented chronologically: *Transition* (1999) questions traditional concepts of beauty, with delicate constructions resembling plique-a-jour enamel work in which translucent pig guts are stretched within steel and gold wire forms; *Lichen* (2006) interprets the fragile woodland organism as enamel simulacra; *Mindscapes* (2018), a series of stunning rectilinear industrial enamel drip paintings on steel, references gestural abstraction; and *Shattenflug* (roughly "shadow flight") captures ephemeral moments by mounting photo pigment prints from Hart's own photographs on flat, geometric steel cutouts. Eight-page inserts of her digital abstract photos are interleaved throughout the book's 128 pages, so as to establish the formal relationships between constructed objects and light-inflected photos.

Brooch, 2004
Silver, enamel, magnets
13½ × 2½ cm
Photo: Fritz Maierhofer and Margit Hart

Two essays and two interviews—presumably selected by Hart, as she is credited with "concept and editing"—comprise the book's text: art-critical analyses by Carl Aigner, a museum director, and Nina Schedlmayer, a magazine editor, together with interviews by curator Mirella Cisotto Nalon and Jonathan Wahl, artist and director of the Jewelry Center at the 92nd Street Y. Except for collection titles and poetic annotations (as with the opening questions, unattributed) the interviews provide Hart with a platform to reveal herself as an artist-jeweler in her own words. In speaking with Nalon, Hart places herself in the "theoretical background of contemporary Jewelry," stating she considers the field as "an independent genre of art." She believes "the value of the artistic statement should be more important than mere material"; although no material is "mere" in her work.

From a family of jewelers, Hart appreciates precious materials and uses them sparingly, but her statement aligns with contemporary acceptance of any and all materials as worthy of artistic consideration. In speaking with Wahl—who notes the two met at SUNY New Paltz in the '90s—Hart says it



Margit Hart: Mindscapes. Jewelry and Photography 1996–2018
Essays by Carl Aigner, Nina Schedlmayer; interviews by Jonathan Wahl, Mirella Cisotto Nalon
Arnoldsche, 2019
128 pages, $50 U.S.

was at SUNY she learned "to live with the non-perfect" and reveals her preference for work "where you can feel personal engagement of the maker." Aigner's challenging postmodernist essay, "In Miniature," discusses Hart's work from a post-structuralist viewpoint, placing her in "the second generation of artists since the 1960s to feel committed to the "epistemes" [Michel Foucault's phrase for "the fundamental codes of a culture"] which in the modern and postmodern age "have been reconstructed as transgressive, multiple, and hybrid."

Hart's early exposure to "contemporary jewelry art," Aigner says, came via acquaintance with the work of Peter Skubic, Fritz Maierhofer (to whom Hart is married), Georg Dobler, Ruudt Peters, Herman Hermsen, and others. (One might mention as well Thomas Gentille, the artist and friend for whom she autographed the volume at hand.) Like many of her contemporaries, Hart works virtually exclusively in the brooch form, which, says Aigner, has its foundations in the identity of the miniature."

Hart's photography is the subject of Schedlmayer's essay, "The Magic of the Everyday," specifically the *Shattenflug* series of shadowy images achieved with a digital camera through the manipulation of sunlight and glass. How exactly this is done remains a mystery, says Schedlmayer, except to say that images "are made by the reflections that appear on a surface when the artist holds a glass above it in a very particular way." The resulting compositions, she says are "imaginary worlds" in "an unimaginable variety of forms." Anyone with the slightest interest in photographic techniques would wish for more about Hart's process, but as Schedlmayer states, "it is not at all clear" how Hart's compositions have been created. We are left to contemplate their mystery both as photos per se and as images printed on steel for brooches that appear to have been cut from shadows, as indeed they have.

Photography figures as well in other collections, as cropped images in collages that include feathers, bits of architecture, and markings that could be construed as grass, a cross, or a snowscape. Whatever their meanings to the eye of the observer, to Hart they represent what the book's title implies: glimpses of an intriguing mindscape captured in jewelry form. Through wearing, says Hart, the context of the photos is actively changing; paradoxically, in other words, impermanence is made durable. "What is most fulfilling," she told Nalon, "is to immerse myself in work. To be in a state of flow." By documenting that flow, *Mindscapes* succeeds in presenting Hart's work in all its subversive beauty and modernist formality.

Andrea DiNoto writes on art, craft, and design.

Gent II (brooch), 2010
Photo on Dibond, silver, lacquer
11 cm diameter
Photo: Fritz Maierhofer and Margit Hart

ELEANOR MOTY: HER BRILLIANTCAREER

BY HELEN W. DRUTT ENGLISH

Photo:
Michael Croft

SNAG'S HIGHEST HONOR, the Lifetime Achievement Award, is bestowed annually upon an individual who has made significant contributions to the field of metalsmithing. Eleanor Moty has been selected as the twenty-fourth recipient in 2020. The award is usually bestowed at SNAG's annual conference, which was cancelled this year due to COVID-19. Therefore, the honor hopefully will be presented to Moty at SNAG's annual conference in May 2021.

Eleanor was born twenty-four miles west of Chicago in a village named Glen Ellyn, and raised on a farm; her duties ranged from domestic to agrarian. The responsibilities of rural living were central to her upbringing, and Eleanor and Joyce, her older sister and best friend, were encouraged by their mother to seek and achieve higher education as they pursued artistic careers. The years that followed showed how Eleanor, first generation in America of Eastern European descent and the youngest of four children, found fulfillment as she matured into an important artist who has helped shape the field of contemporary metalsmithing.

I have known Eleanor since her early years as a graduate student at the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. I believe we first met in Kit-Yin Tieng Snyder's kitchen in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, in 1968; Kit-Yin was a ceramics professor at Swarthmore. We were standing in front of a duck carcass, watching Kit-Yin blowing through a straw as the air penetrated and separated the skin. Thus the virtues of preparing Peking duck were being revealed to us. At that time, Stanley Lechtzin chaired Eleanor's program at Tyler, and she was residing with Kit-Yin.

Our friendship, which began at that moment, was strengthened as a result of my involvement with the craft renaissance in Philadelphia—and in particular the craft program at Tyler. Her professional journey became a prominent aspect of my life as I followed her career from Tyler and Moore College of Art in Philadelphia (Eleanor was an instructor at Moore from 1970 to 1972) to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she taught from 1972 to 2001; and finally to maintaining her independent studio full time in Tucson,

Lightning Box (front and interior view), 1972
Sterling silver, brass, copper, fine silver electrodeposition, agate, photo printed leather
2 x 5¼ x 3½ in.
Collection of Robert L. Pfannebecker
Photo by the artist

Shadow Brooch, 2006
Tom Munsteiner, lapidary artist
Sterling silver, 18K gold, quartz
2½ x 1¾ x ⅜ in.
Collection of Caroline and Roger Ford
Photo by the artist

Arizona. As her career flourished, her work entered private and public collections throughout the world.

Eleanor was among the first artists to use the technique of photo fabrication, bringing unique imagery into her work. For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, she documented family history—her sister, her mother, their farm, beloved friends—in her jewelry, not unlike a photo album, with pieces such as *Moty Sisters Belt Buckle* (1972) and *Homage to J. Fred Woell* (reversible necklace, 1968). The powerful *Lightning Box* (1972), and the extraordinary *Landscape Handbag* (1973), whose innovative form and surface imagery has been lost to history since it was stolen from an exhibition, are among exceptional works from this period.

When toxic environmental difficulties prevented her continuation of photo fabrication and electroforming, Eleanor's interest in gems burgeoned and took a dominant place in her work, bringing a unique combination of stone, minerals, and metal. One recognizes "a Moty brooch" from a distance. As Marjorie Simon aptly stated in a 2012 *Metalsmith* profile:

> Moty's early retreat from the narrative signaled that she is not one to indulge in mythologizing her past. Yet that physical and cultural landscape informs her work practice. Imprinted to the landscape of the farm and the primal elements of the flat Midwest, she knew clean lines, snowy fields, parched summer, frozen winter. Skating on the creek, she saw bumpy grass and small sticks poking through the ice. She always saw the horizon.[1]

Eleanor remains dedicated to her graduate professor, Stanley Lechtzin, and to her colleagues from that time, one of whom was Albert Paley. At Wisconsin, she was renowned as an educator as well as for her friendships and commitment to her students, colleagues, and mentors—in particular, Robert von Neumann, Oppi Untracht, Fred Fenster, and J. Fred Woell. Eleanor holds on to friendships fiercely. Through letters, postcards, phone calls, and emails—even recipes, as well as photographs documenting relationships tangential to her own—no stone is unturned. She is our Brenda Starr: our beloved girl reporter. As an observer, I have often wondered how she continually tracked her friends and colleagues as well as her students. Eleanor is a walking encyclopedia who follows generations of her fellow artists, students, and collectors.

During her career, Eleanor has been the recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts Craftsman Fellowships (1975 and 1988), and she has been named a "Master of the Medium" by the James Renwick Alliance, a Fellow of the American Craft Council (1998), and a Master Metalsmith by the Metal Museum (2012), among other recognitions of her peers. Her oral history was conducted by Sharon Church for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, in 2014.[2]

Eleanor's work has been extensively exhibited in national and international exhibitions. Notable among them were *Metalsmiths and Mentors, Fred Fenster and Eleanor Moty* (Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2006); *Master Metalsmith: Eleanor Moty* (Metal Museum, Memphis, 2012); and *Gifts from America* at The State Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg, Russia, 2014). She was represented at the Museo del Gioiello in Vicenza (2016–2018) in an exhibition that celebrated American jewelry for the first time in Italy. Her work is on view in *45 Stories in Jewelry*, an exhibition documenting the permanent collection of the Museum of Arts and Design (New York, 2020), and recently her pieces have been acquired by the permanent collections of The Goldsmiths' Company (London) and the Yale University Art Gallery (New Haven, Connecticut). Her devoted friend of many decades, the late Oppi Untracht, designated funds in his will to support the forthcoming publication of Eleanor's monograph, *Quiet Elegance: The Jewelry of Eleanor Moty*, by Arnoldsche Art Publishers.

As I observe the fifty-year history of the Society of North American Goldsmiths, I remember fondly that Eleanor Moty encouraged me to accompany her to St. Paul for the celebration of *Goldsmith '70*. Her professional dedication to her field was strongly evident at the beginning and has only intensified throughout the decades.

Moty Sisters Belt Buckle, 1972
Photo-etched bronze, brass, copper, sterling silver
1⅝ x 1 x ⅜ in.
Collection of Joyce Moty
Photo by the artist

Helen W. Drutt English was Founder/Director of her eponymous gallery in Philadelphia (1973–2002). Drutt English is a trustee of the Archives of American Art and is currently researching a book that documents activities central to the craft field from 1960 to the present as well as sourcing American jewelry for international museums.

1 Marjorie Simon, "Eleanor Moty: Romancing the Stone," *Metalsmith* Vol. 32, No. 1, 2012, 33. / **2** The transcript is available online; see "Oral history interview with Eleanor Moty, 2014 November 18-20," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-eleanor-moty-16217.

PAUL HULTBERG

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST ENAMELIST

By Alan Rosenberg

ENAMEL HAS BEEN KNOWN SINCE ANTIQUITY,

and its appeal, then and now, lies in its rich visual and tactile qualities, its jewel-like colors and glossy-smooth surface. Paul Hultberg (1926–2019) took this traditional craft medium and spread it broadly and even brashly over wide copper fields, just as his abstract expressionist peers were doing in paint on canvas. Where once it was delicate, Hultberg made enamel bold. While most traditional artists had chosen to reflect light in enamel's mirrorlike surface, Hultberg played smooth against rough surfaces, in planes that glisten with explosive color but also absorb and exude darkness like a celestial black hole.

Paul Hultberg was born in Oakland, California. He studied painting and printmaking at the University of Southern California and Fresno State College. In the 1940s, he traveled to Mexico, where he learned to dig in the earth for natural pigments. Hultberg also explored the latest synthetic paints while working in the atelier of Jose Gutierrez, an innovator in artistic media who experimented with artistically viable paints that could withstand outdoor conditions. Hultberg's exposure to the modern Mexican mural practice had a lasting influence as it showed that a wide audience could appreciate art if it was brought into their daily lives.

Hultberg spent 1948 stationed in Japan while serving in the U.S. Army. By the early 1950s he was teaching painting and printmaking at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, where he began to experiment with enameling. Soon the school's director, Augustus Peck, asked Hultberg to establish an enameling program there. Hultberg pursued an experimental approach to the application of enamel, incorporating accidents and overplaying certain steps in the enamel crafting process. The application of heat to clean raw copper in advance of applying enamel results in the appearance of layers of firescale, an oxide that is usually scraped off. Hultberg realized that the irregular and organic appearance of firescale had artistic possibilities, providing color and pattern that could be preserved with a layer of transparent enamel and combined with various colored enamels in mutating degrees of opacity.

Hultberg followed this unorthodox direction, and the results are illustrated in fellow Brooklyn Museum School teacher Oppi Untracht's 1957 book *Enameling on Metal*. Hultberg's mastery of enamel application techniques including sgraffito, stenciling, and drawing fine lines with glycerin in a resist process is shown in photographs of the artist with works in process. Among the completed works illustrated is the panel *Pines and Lake*, in which the highly abstracted landscape has been painted freehand in slush (enamel

Left:
Untitled, ca. 1955
Enamel on copper
36 x 6 in.
Image courtesy of Lawrence Hultberg
Photo: Brandon Snider

Previous spread:
Little Johnson, 1969
Fired enamel on copper
48 x 36 in.
Image courtesy of Moderne Gallery
Photo: Christian Giannelli

Domesticrafts enameled cigarette case, ca. 1955
Image courtesy of Lawrence Hultberg

Don Quixote, ca. 1954
Slush painted and
scratched enamel on copper
21 x 15 in. (nine individual
panels, 7 x 5 in. each)
Image courtesy of Lawrence Hultberg

in water suspension) in high contrasts of dark and light on twelve contiguous steel panels. The copper panel paintings *Baroque City* and *Winter Hillside* display the artist's facility in creating conventionalized designs with depth via multiple layers of stenciled enamel.

Having mastered both small and large- scale enamel techniques, Hultberg decided to put his knowledge into profitable practice. In the mid 1950s he was the creative force behind a commercial enameling venture in New York called Domesticrafts. Hultberg devised nearly one hundred different stenciled designs for enameled plates, bowls, and small plaques that were mounted in boxes and compacts for cosmetics. During this period, Hultberg did not limit himself to enamels, prints, and paintings; he even designed textiles that were displayed at the Brooklyn Museum in 1952 in an exhibition titled *The Artist as Artisan*. Augustus Peck stated to *The New York Times* that the exhibition was "based on the assumption that fine art is the source of all applied design; give the artist a technical skill and you will have an inspired artisan who will produce utilitarian objects."[1] Produce Hultberg did, prodigiously: he estimated that Domesticrafts manufactured 45,000 pieces between 1953 and 1956.

By 1958 Hultberg was expanding to more spatially and commercially ambitious applications of enamel. In that year his "enameled metal for a permanent wall covering cemented into place—$24 a square foot" was featured by Betty Pepis in *The New York Times*. Pepis was a keen observer of even the most subtle trends in home design; her inclusion of Hultberg's "enamel wallpaper" supported her assertion that "stronger than ever is the trend to building decoration right into the architecture."[2] Reiterating the architectonic theme, the enamel tiles illustrated displayed a motif that suggests rows of arched windows and doors in an all-over abstracted design that could extend indefinitely.

Hultberg's commitment to public art and the enthusiastic response to his work from the architecture and design community resulted in many major mural

"I'M TRYING TO USE THE SAME PROCESSES THAT OCCUR IN NATURE IN ORDER TO GET A WIDER VOCABULARY OF EXPRESSION."

Four *Untitled Abstract*,
ca. 1965
Enamel on copper
12 x 12 in. (each)
Image courtesy of
Moderne Gallery
Photo: Christian Giannelli

commissions. A notable exterior installation was the *Stairway to the Stars*, a four story open-air escalator commissioned by Anheuser-Busch in 1959 for their Busch Gardens complex in Tampa, Florida. Hultberg adorned the sides of the moving stairway with colorful prismatic enamel panels. Similarly, shoppers at the Abraham & Strauss store in Huntington, New York, were exposed to Hultberg's art in the form of forty wall sculptures. Executives, office workers, and passersby encountered his monumental forty-five-foot mural in enamel on aluminum for the Alcoa Corporation in midtown Manhattan.

While executing these public commissions, Hultberg continued developing expressionistic effects in more personal large-scale works. The artist's fascination with the chance effects of oxidation was consonant with his entire approach to enamel as an art medium based on "indirect" application, much like that of printmaking. In 1960, his studio work was featured as the cover story of the March-April issue of *Craft Horizons*; there he explained that:

> the printmaker has a taste for indirect effects, not like the painter, who makes a stroke and there it is—paint. In print making it is a matter of doing something that does something else: scratching the plate, wax resist, acid, all kinds of texturing and multiple printings. In enamels, also, the techniques are indirect. You have the enamel as a granular, sand-like pigment. The problem is how to get this where you want it. It doesn't handle like paint. The firing changes its color and texture. As in print making or ceramics, you don't know *exactly* how it will come out.[3]

Paul Hultberg in his studio in 1969, working on *Johnson Together*, exhibited in *OBJECTS: USA* and published in the book of the same title.

Hultberg also likened the exploitation of unplanned effects to the organic evolution of nature itself: "I'm trying to use the same processes that occur in nature in order to get a wider vocabulary of expression."[4] In this effort, he was inspired by Japanese art, declaring in the article that "Michelangelo was the earliest influence upon me and Korin screens the latest!"[5] Korin Ogata, the founder of the revolutionary eighteenth-century Rinpa school of Japanese painting, was known for his signature technique of mixing ink with metallic pigments on gold leaf, called *tarashikomi* ("dripping in"). The method was described by John T. Carpenter, in his study *Designing Nature: the Rinpa Aesthetic in Japanese Art*:

> *Tarashikomi* creates various gradations of ink diffused with a discrete area of the painting surface. Since it is impossible to predict how the ink will spread after it is applied to a damp area, the artist voluntarily surrenders to the whims of nature and the physical properties of the ink and pigment.[6]

Hultberg's blending of Japanese ideas into contemporary art and craft found confirmation amongst a like-minded group of artists when he joined the Gate Hill Cooperative in 1954, a creative community in Rockland County, New York, founded a few years earlier by faculty and students from Black Mountain College, the experimental art school in North Carolina. Gate Hill's 116 wooded acres stimulated the creativity of artists, composers, writers, and filmmakers,

Untitled, ca. 1960
Enamel on copper
12 x 16 in.
Image courtesy of
Lawrence Hultberg
Photo: Brandon Snider

including Karen Karnes, Sari Dienes, M.C. Richards, David Tudor, Stan VanDerBeek, and John Cage. Cage became well-known as the leading advocate for the use of chance in the creative process for his radical musical compositions, which grew out of his study of Zen Buddhism, the Chinese I Ching system of divination, and the influence of surrealism.

Hultberg utilized chance as a design device when composing 108 copper panels that comprised a twenty-four-foot-long mural for the exterior of the studio of architect Paul Williams, Gate Hill co-founder and designer of the houses there: placement and color of the panels was determined by picking numbers randomly from a telephone book. At Gate Hill, Hultberg designed and built his own furnace which allowed him to work on ever larger sheets of copper, in excess of sixty inches, over which he spread enamel in calligraphic and explosively expressionistic passages. In 1960 he contemplated his own work, noting: "The brush work here also retains the character of stroke—pressure, length, speed, area—a sense of kinetic forces pressing outward."[7] His works of the 1960s and '70s are notably akin to Japanese screen paintings in their horizontal format, with organic imagery spread across multiple copper panels. Recalling the earth pigments of his Mexican sojourn, Hultberg's palette tended strongly towards the tones of the natural environment: rich brown, vibrant orange, brick red, with the golden glow of the sun and the dark black of night.

By the mid-1960s Hultberg was recognized as a major contributor to the vitality and growing intersection of art and craft in America. His work was shown in the *Adventures in Art* exhibition at the 1962 Seattle World's Fair and his studio practice was documented at the 1964 New York World's Fair in the photographic exhibition *The American Craftsman*. The exhibition, presented by the American Craft Council in the Pavilion of American Interiors, featured five of the most outstanding craftspeople working in the US at that time. His 1965 show at the venerable Boston Society of Arts and Crafts, consisting of large works and a group of new small one-square-foot panels, was lavishly praised by ceramist-critic Harriet Goodwin Cohen in *Craft Horizons*:

> The magnificent textures, luminescent colors and superb economy of means are something that every person in this country concerned with enamels—from individual craftsmen to industrial designers—should see and take note of. [. . .] by partially leaving fire scale and contrasting various oxidizing effects he incorporates the flame into his work, and thus justifies what he does in enamel rather than merely emulating painting in another medium.[8]

Stairway to the Stars, 1959
Busch Gardens, Tampa, Florida
Image courtesy of
Lawrence Hultberg

Cohen went on to laud Hultberg's "genius for color and his brilliant ability to make subtle, sometimes startling juxtapositions of hue and value. His colors are striking, salient but not quite jarring." Of the art versus craft debate, Cohen lauded Hultberg's work for its "evasiveness": "If we could find a "*meaning*" (voice quavering with quotes and italics), might that not clinch the art or decoration argument, at least for Hultberg? What a silly quibble when confronted with so much of such magnificence."[9]

In 1966 the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York presented a one-man show of Hultberg's small enamel on copper panels. In the brochure, Elizabeth Breckenridge wrote:

> The artist recognizes and accepts the power that the forms of nature have over his work. The time of day, the seasons, light, sounds—all these contribute directly to the state of mind and being that are translated and transformed in his effort to create art with a "feeling of place" about it. Yet only a few of his panels have a definable landscape figuration; they seem rather to embody the feeling of natural phenomena—the events of light and space, the very rhythms of creation are caught in these luminous, shimmering surfaces.[10]

Found Horizon, 1972
Enamel on copper
24 x 48 in.
Image courtesy of Moderne Gallery
Photo: Christian Giannelli

ENAMEL IS MUCH LIKE LIFE: PARADOXICALLY FRAGILE AND EASILY BROKEN IF MISHANDLED, BUT DURABLE AND LONG-LASTING WHEN TREATED WELL.

In 1969 a major new direction in Hultberg's work was revealed in a new large-scale multi-paneled mural for the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel C. Johnson of S.C. Johnson & Johnson, Inc., who endeavored to gather the ultimate assembly of the best American crafts of the time. In this they were guided by Lee Nordness, a visionary New York curator and dealer who shared Hultberg's indifference to the tiresome, insoluble art-craft debate. His four-by-seven-foot mural, titled *Johnson Together*, inaugurated a striking new interest in primary colors: lipstick red, royal blue, and pure bright white contrasted with the autumnal tones that had been the hallmark of his work until that time. The Johnson Collection was unveiled in a traveling exhibition that originated at the Smithsonian Institution under the title *Objects: USA*, documented in a book of the same name that remains the definitive document of American crafts in the 1960s.

Pursuing this new chromatic direction, Hultberg produced a body of work in the 1970s and '80s in porcelain enamel on large steel panels, featuring broad, smooth, placid lakes of bright primary and secondary colors that were bold yet soothing, and kindred to the Color Field painting that had emerged amongst painters such as Jules Olitski and Kenneth Noland. These panels present a rather startling late evolution towards art as both calm and exultant; joyous yet meditative.

Hultberg's new color field direction culminated in an immersive installation for the headquarters of Metromedia in New York in 1986. *Apple Dapple*, in porcelain enamel on steel, was comprised of sixteen four-by-three-foot panels, covering the sixty-foot perimeter of the company's reception area. Pigment, poured and pooled on steel, evoked colored clouds of sky-blue, putty pink, marigold yellow, and earthy reds and browns, with bright white emerging and blurring the distinctions between foreground and background. Some viewers of *Apple Dapple* may see signs and symbols in the artist's bold calligraphy, while others simply enjoy the view of a colorful topography: a map of the artist's unadulterated joy in colors and shapes.

Following the apotheosis in enamel of *Apple Dapple*, Hultberg returned to painting on canvas. Although he left the Gate Hill Coop in 1960, he remained in Rockland County where, in 1966, he joined the faculty of the State University of New York—Suffern. He was appointed Professor Emeritus there in 1993.

The 50th anniversary of *Objects: USA* has given new audiences the opportunity to view Hultberg's art: *Johnson Together* was exhibited in *Objects Redux* at the Racine Art Museum in 2019. Hal Nelson and Bernard N. Jazzar, curators and founders of the Enamel Arts Foundation, describe Hultberg as "among the most audacious artists working in the 20th century enamels field; his use of unorthodox application and

firing practices proved inspirational to a generation of enamelists seeking new ways to explore this time-honored medium."[11]

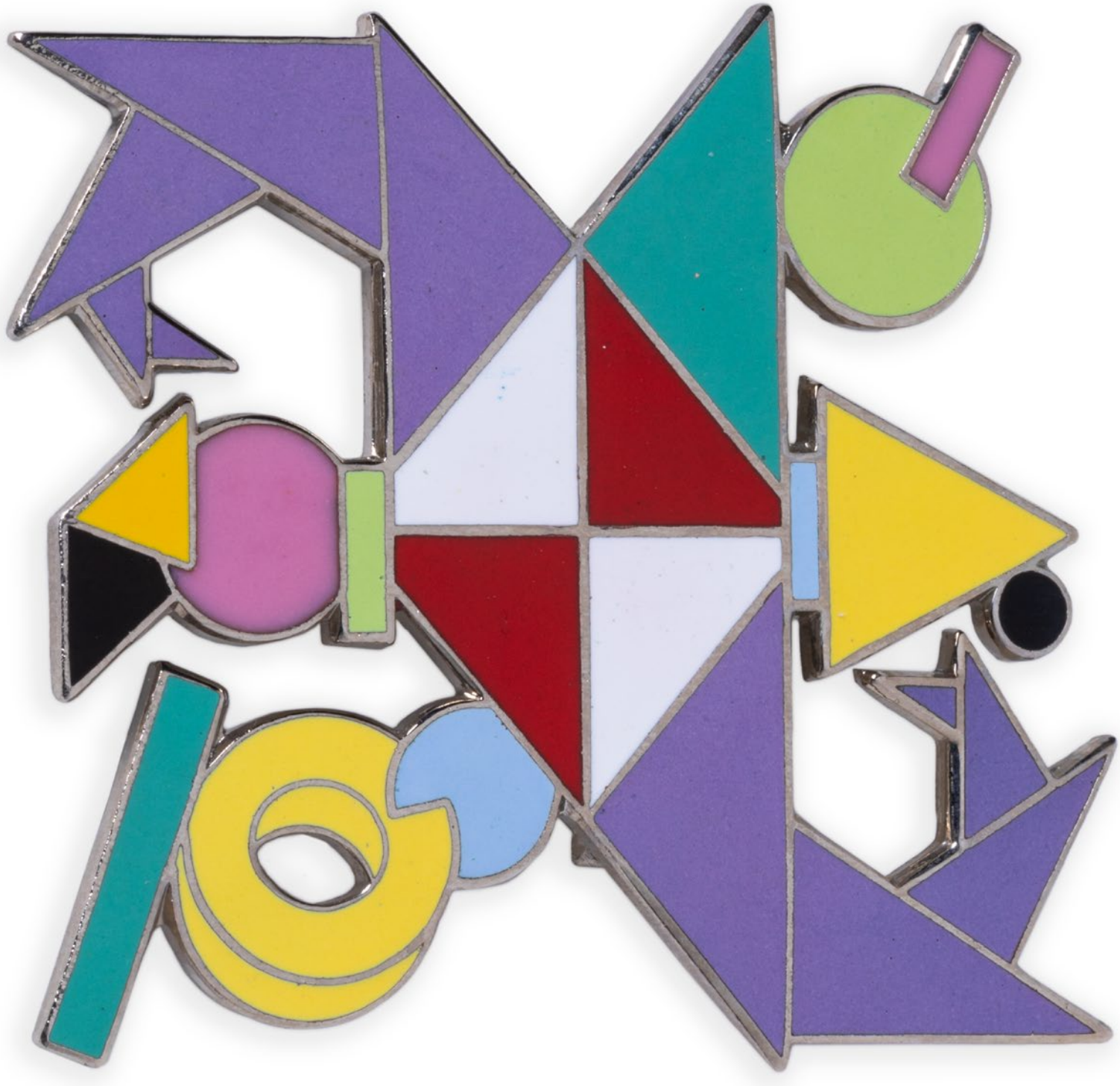
At the time of his death in 2019 at the age of ninety-three, Hultberg and his wife Ethel Sky (an accomplished artist/craftsperson in her own right) had been living for some years in retirement in the south of France, in a picturesque setting that would be the envy of anyone who believes that the ultimate creative undertaking is *l'art de vivre*. Paul Hultberg lives forever in his art, and enamel is much like life: paradoxically fragile and easily broken if mishandled, but durable and long-lasting when treated well.

Alan Rosenberg is an art and design historian and curator in New York and New Orleans. His writing has been published in Silver Magazine *and he has lectured on enamels at the Cleveland Museum of Art.*

1 Betty Pepis, "Museum to Show Utilitarian Items," *The New York Times*, September 5, 1952, 17. / **2** Betty Pepis, "Traditional Reigns, Built-In Sets the Trend," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1958. / **3** M.C. Richards, "Paul Hultberg: the Enamel as Mural," *Craft Horizons*, March/April 1960, 28. / **4** Richards, 29. / **5** Richards, 32. / **6** John T. Carpenter, *Designing Nature: The Rinpa Aesthetic in Japanese Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012). / **7** Richards, 32. / **8** Harriet Goodwin Cohen, "Letter From Boston," *Craft Horizons*, September/October 1965, 47. / **9** Cohen, 47. / **10** Elizabeth Breckenridge, *Enamels by Paul Hultberg* (New York: Museum of Contemporary Crafts, 1966). / **11** Hal Nelson and Bernard N. Jazzar, interview with the author, June 2020.

Apple, 1986
Enamel on steel
60 x 39 in.
Image courtesy of Moderne Gallery
Photo: Christian Giannelli

Apple Dapple, 1985–86
Enamel on steel
4 x 60 ft. (14 panels)
Image courtesy Lawrence Hultberg



LOOKING BACKWARD AND MOVING FORWARD

ACME Studio's Enameled Jewelry 1985–1992

By Allison Krier

Adrian Olabuenaga, ACME Studios
SCREAMER (brooch), n.d.
Metal
9½ x 9½ cm
Courtesy of The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi

Previous spread:
Peter Shire, ACME Studios
LA CIENEGA (brooch), 1985
Cloisonné
6 x 5½ cm
Courtesy of The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi

THE 1980s

was a decade of revolutionary ideas about the aesthetics of imagery, color, and surface, and jewelry proved a powerful medium for exploration.

ACME Studio, founded in 1985 by Adrian Olabuenaga and Lesley Bailey in Los Angeles, in its first year took on the remarkable task of producing jewelry with two of the foremost design groups of the era: Memphis Milano and Studio Alchimia.

The results were a collection of more than one hundred imaginative and vibrant works, harnessing the Postmodern style of the innovative Italian movements, as well as a model for combining production with handcrafted enameling.

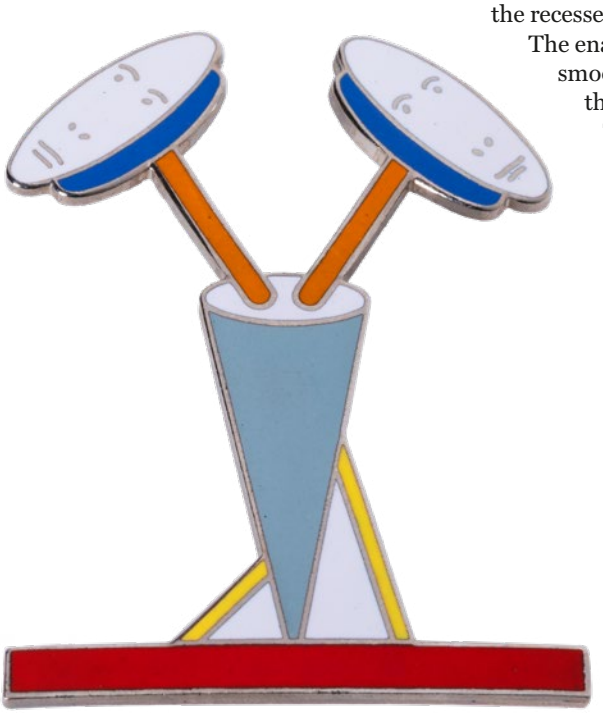
Though it is often said that Memphis came out of nowhere and left as quickly, its reputation as a fad does not quite address its intellectual gravity, consequential influence, nor accomplishments of the moment.

Adrian Olabuenaga's lifelong interest in design, including jewelry, began at a young age. Raised to appreciate art, architecture and design, he started experimenting with crafting sterling silver jewelry in the 1970s. Soon after, he began designing various objects and creating art furniture, which he exhibited in a solo show in 1983. As a designer within the Los Angeles community, Olabuenaga was able to capitalize on connections to co-found ACME Studio with his wife Lesley Bailey. The company began with jewelry but later expanded to create various accessories, such as card cases, wallets, and pens, through designer collaborations.

The ACME collaborations with Memphis Milano and Studio Alchimia intertwined the millennia-old intricate enameling techniques of champlevé and cloisonné with Postmodernism's flamboyant color compositions and fine silver. Champlevé, literally translated, means raised fields. The champlevé technique, sometimes confused with cloisonné, forms designs by carving out cavities from the thickness of the metal support. Stamping the metal is another means of creating the wells. The enamel, a fine powder of glass and pigment, mixed with distilled water creating a paste, is placed into the recessed cells and then fired. The enameled surface is then smoothed to be level with the metal framework. Though similar, cloisonné employs very fine strips of metal, creating the compartments (or cloisons) and creates the composition.

It is no wonder that these expressive methods were used by the iconoclastic Memphis Milano and Studio Alchimia in their ACME collaboration. Both groups were borne out of the creativity and Radical Design approaches flourishing in Italy in the 1970s.[1] The supremacy of imagery over form became a prevailing leitmotif of Memphis and Studio Alchimia, not dissimilar from the mystical and ritualistic works of the Middle Ages. The Modern Movement's philosophies of functionalist and rationalist design directly challenged the orthodoxy of the emphasis on form, and a new optimism began to surge.

Memphis designer and founder Ettore Sottsass (1917–2007) was a greatly influential and enigmatic figure in the Radical Design Movement of the '60s and '70s. He was deeply interested in popular culture, mysticism, and Eastern religions, which he synthesized in his designs including for ACME. When Sottsass formed The Memphis Group in Milan in 1981, he aimed to re-invigorate the Radical Design movement. A pastiche of inspiration from past styles to funky futuristic looks embodied the zeitgeist. Sottsass's *Optima* brooch (1985), albeit abstract, conjures mystical symbolism re-imagined with his flamboyant modern style, as do the *Cometa* earrings (1986), with



Andrea Branzi, ACME Studios
BALANCE (brooch), 1985
Cloisonné
6½ x 4⅝ cm
Courtesy of The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi

Studio Alchimia, ACME Studios
ARABESQUE (brooch), 1986
Cloisonné
4⅝ x 5⅞ cm
Courtesy of The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi

their nascent energy and vitality. Though it is often said that Memphis came out of nowhere and left as quickly, its reputation as a fad does not quite address its intellectual gravity, consequential influence, nor accomplishments of the moment.[2]

Likewise, the Italian architect and designer Andrea Branzi was a pivotal force in the Postmodern and Italian Radical Design movements, including as a member of Studio Alchimia, which began creating enamel pieces for ACME in 1986. In his 1984 book, *The Hot House: Italian New Wave Design*, Branzi posited critical perspectives about design and acted as a guide for new directions. Branzi's ideas of *re-design* and *banal design*, challenged rules of good design and attention to surface and the importance of decoration as a system for cultural information became key elements of Studio Alchimia's output. The question of color was also a powerful element, as a connection between man and the world around him, as it "gives rise to the nervous stimuli of vision."[3] Branzi's *BALANCE* brooch (1986) carefully constructs elements of shape and color that seem awkwardly arranged with larger elliptical faces balancing atop an assymetrical configuration comprised of a cone, triangles, and rectangles. The brooch encompasses an anti-design attitude, yet displays an understanding of compositional structure that is adeptly rendered with the enameling techniques. Alchimia's *ARABESQUE* brooch (1986) also accomplishes this as it recalls the intricate and dense decorative patterns of the Middle Eastern with a potent color scheme.[4]

Ettore Sottsass
ACME Studios
OPTIMA (brooch),
ca. 1985
Cloisonné
6⅝ x 4⅜ cm
Courtesy of
The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi

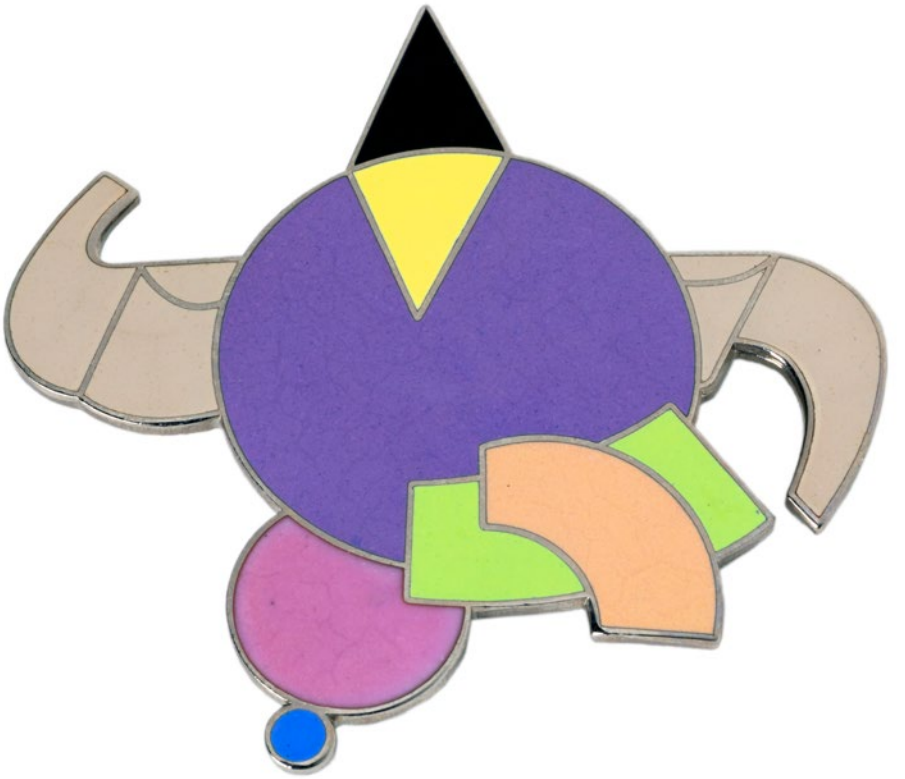
The potential of enamel to achieve colors and patterns ranging from subtle to garish made it an ideal medium for the counterculture directions of Memphis and Studio Alchimia that challenged the severity of prevailing minimal and functionalist design. In 1985, Olabuenaga first asked the Los Angeles–based Memphis member Peter Shire to design a limited edition of twelve brooches for ACME named the *Melrose Emblematic.* (Melrose is the street on which ACME was located.) This partnership led to the crucial introduction of Olabuenaga to Sottsass, who was enthusiastic about the possibility of designing jewelry. The Memphis Group continued to create numerous designs for enamel pieces and, at the urging of Sottsass, Olabuenaga contributed his own designs as well.

In 1986, Andrea Branzi was invited to participate in the ACME design collaboration at the suggestion of Sottsass and Barbara Radice, the Italian writer and critic associated with Memphis. Branzi was included in the collection entitled *Memphis Designers for ACME*, although he primarily designed with Studio Alchimia. The Memphis designers were not trained as jewelers or metalsmiths, and most had never designed jewelry. The works were far less about the relationship to the body than they were a means to create a wearable work of art. They stood as conspicuous mini-manifestos of the intellectual irreverence for good taste, with eccentric, humorous, and odd geometric arrangements, as well as flashy patterns. The imagery also revealed the group's interest in historical movements such as Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and Pop. Yet still, these adornments are indeed wearable as a brooch, necklace, or as earrings. The collection premiered at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in 1986, and toured with the Memphis Milano exhibition.[5]

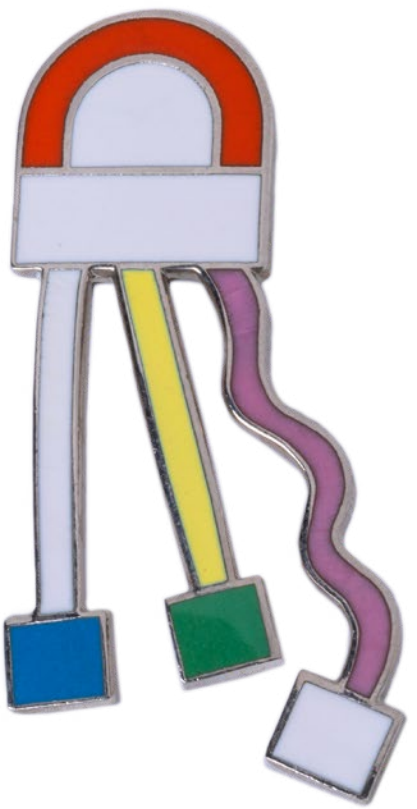
Peter Shire had never designed jewelry before the ACME venture. The nature of his approach was graphic, and a terrific fit for the enameled jewelry undertaking. Unlike many in Memphis, his background was not in architecture. Shire had trained as a ceramicist, and his design aesthetic consisted of quirky and intensely colorful arrangements and geometric shapes, often asymmetrical and intricately composed, indicative of a California Postmodern

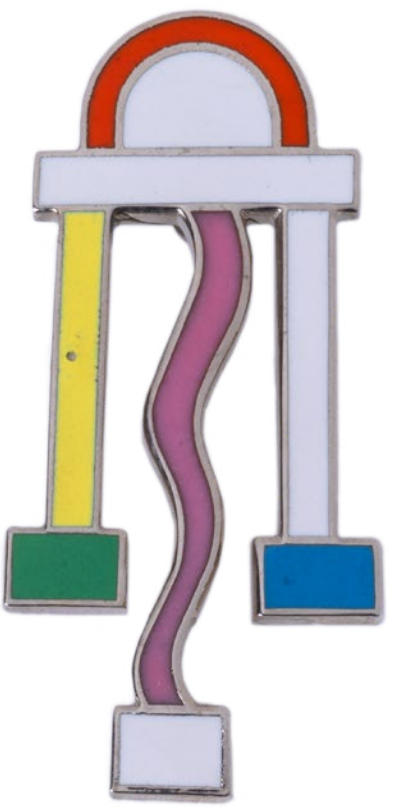
The works stood as conspicuous mini-manifestos of the intellectual irreverence for good taste, with eccentric, humorous, and odd geometric arrangements, as well as flashy patterns.

Peter Shire
ACME Studios
FAIRFAX (brooch), 1985
Cloisonné
5½ x 6¼ cm
Courtesy of
The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi



Ettore Sottsass
ACME Studios
COMETA (earrings), 1986
Cloisonné
4½ x 2 cm
Courtesy of
The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi





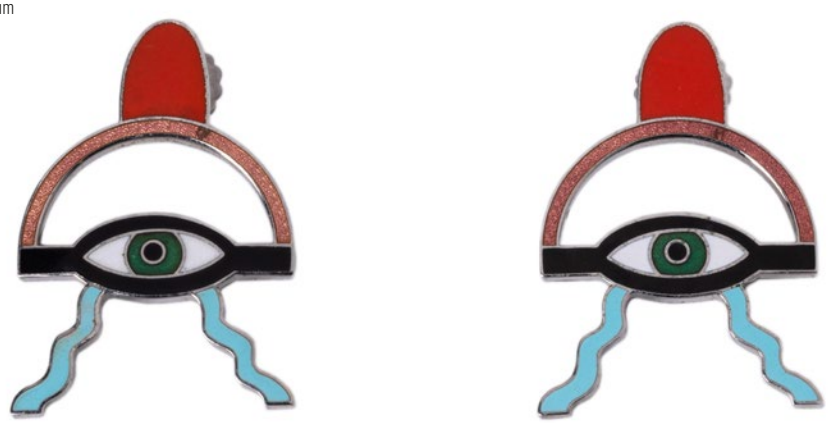
The nostalgic designs vividly represent the era's iconoclastic spirit and optimism, but also still appeal to contemporary tastes.

Marco Zanini
ACME Studios
MARACCIBO (necklace), 1985
Cloisonné
6½ x 7⅝ cm
Courtesy of
The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi

perspective. Sottsass invited Shire to join the collective, and he brought a fresh viewpoint to Postmodern themes. His brooches *LA CIENEGA* and *FAIRFAX*, both from the *Melrose* line and named for streets in Los Angeles, represent his whimsical and colorful style, and play with asymmetry as it references region and location. Shire remarked in a recent conversation how the design could be more directly realized from paper to object without any or much negotiation. Although the process did not drive his concept, champlevé as a technique facilitated a more direct translation. Although each piece was individually crafted, the overall precision and graphic nature of the enameling techniques were well suited to executing Shire's designs. The miniscule size of jewelry as compared to other design projects was another satisfying characteristic for Shire, and connected to his interest in miniatures. For him, it was an interesting challenge to create an artistic composition at such a petite scale.[6]

To put the ideas into production ACME contracted a workshop in Taiwan, where the pieces were handcrafted using traditional enameling techniques. However, this required craftspeople to interpret techniques according to drawings by individuals who had never made jewelry. Enameling can be a fussy process, and is subject to myriad pitfalls of hand craftsmanship or environment. Many variables can create stress in the glass enamel, causing fractures or difficulty fusing to the metal surface. Quality control over multiples of various designs would have been difficult, especially considering the

Nathalie Du Pasquier,
ACME Studios
LARME CROC (earrings), 1985
Cloisonné
4 x 2¾ cm
Courtesy of The Groninger Museum
Photo: Heinz Aebi



distance, language barriers, and cultural differences. As with any new undertaking, there is a period of learning the physics of the material. Peter Shire recalled challenges with cracking, the combination of colored and transparent enamels, and not being able to attain a graphic black that did not reveal as much surface variation. Also, intense heat on metal causes oxidation, and finishing and refinement is a more sensitive and difficult operation, as overhandling of the glass enamel can cause fissures.[7]

Having the jewelry fabricated in Taiwan kept the Memphis designs affordable. Retailing at approximately $30–$40, the equivalent of $80–$90 today, the collection represented a reaction to and fascination with consumer culture that exploded in the 1980s. The pieces stood as objects of anti-status, lacking the conspicuous elements of gold and gemstones, and expressed a penchant for economic accessibility. As commodities of fashion, they were not always purchased by those aware of the theoretical underpinnings.[8] With a surge in interest for the group's work and its distinct visual vocabulary, the vintage pieces have made their way back to commercial success, possibly as newly emerging heirlooms. Released from storage, remaining pieces are being sold on the ACME website; pieces can also be found in museum shops as well as secondary market platforms.[9]

ACME produced the Memphis and Studio Alchimia jewelry designs through 1992. The company continues to contract notable designers like Karim Rashid, and the sibling architects Gisue and Mojgan Hariri, to create enamelled pieces. Today, the vintage Memphis and Alchimia works still stand out. They continue to offer inspiration, as articulated in the colorful enamel pins by the San Francisco-based studio Yellow Owl Workshop. Meanwhile, the original ACME pieces can be found in museums collections such as The Groninger Museum in the Netherlands and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The nostalgic designs vividly represent the era's iconoclastic spirit and optimism, but also still appeal to contemporary tastes. Once deemed a a brief fad, the legacy of ACME's Memphis and Alchimia jewelry collections is now well-established.

Allison Krier is an art and design historian and jewelry artist based in New York City.

1 The Radical Design movement emerged in Italy in the late 1960s as backlash to the established ideals of good taste as promoted by the Good Design movement. Theoretical and experimental, it sought to change attitudes shaped by Modernism's utopian propositions. The leading groups were architectural collectives such as Archizoom and Superstudio. Charlotte and Peter Fiell, *Design of the 20th Century* (Cologne: Taschen, 1999), 589. / **2** Fiell, 461-466, 654; Penny Sparke, *Design in Italy, 1870 to the Present* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), 188-189; Barbara Radice, *Jewelry By Architects: From the Collection of Cleto Munari* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 7-9. / **3** Andrea Branzi, *The Hot House, Italian New Wave Design* (MIT Press: 1984), 102. / **4** Branzi,102-103, 115-120. / **5** Fiell, 32, 461-462, 654; Sparke, 161, 188-189; Radice, 7-9, 70, 76; Monica Khemsurov, "Acme Legacy's Archival Memphis Jewelry," *Sight Unseen*, March 18, 2015, , https://www.sightunseen.com/2015/03/acme-legacys-archival-memphis-jewelry. / **6** Peter Shire, phone interview, June 4, 2020; Fiell, 646. / **7** Peter Shire, phone interview with Allison Krier, June 4, 2020; Harold Osborne, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Decorative Arts* (Oxford University Press, 1975), 333-334; Thompson Enamels, "Help and Information," https://thompsonenamel.com/enameling-help-and-information. / **8** Peter Shire, phone interview with Allison Krier, June 4, 2020. / **9** Khemsurov.

Mi-Sook Hur

Feather Trace, an Exploration

By Punam Madhok

In February of 2016,

professors Abderrahmane Azzi and Platon Alexiou from the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, visited the East Carolina University (ECU) School of Art and Design. During their time on campus, they visited *Feather Trace*, Mi-Sook Hur's exhibition of enamel jewelry that was on view at ECU's Faulkner Gallery. Following that visit, I, as Coordinator of the Art History program, met with the professors, accompanied by the artist, a professor of metal design at ECU. As we conversed, Hur told me that Professor Alexiou, an art historian, had pointed out to her the significance of feathers in ancient Egyptian art. That sparked a discussion of *The Book of the Dead*, an ancient Egyptian funerary text on a collection of papyrus scrolls, and the scroll *Last Judgment of Hunefer* (ca. 1285 BCE), in which the weighing of Hunefer's heart against a light but powerful ostrich feather (symbol of Maat, goddess of truth, order, justice, and balance) decided if he was worthy of an afterlife.[1]

Above:
Reflection 1 and 2, 2013
Vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver, stainless steel pin
1½ x 2⅛ x ⅜ in. (each)
Photo by the artist

Previous spread:
Feather 1 and 2, 2013
Vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver, stainless steel pin
1½ x 2⅛ x ⅜ in. (each)
Photo by the artist

An email correspondence ensued between us regarding feathers and their symbolism. I saw Hur as one in a line of storied artists who were captivated by birds and their feathers. Leonardo da Vinci[2] regarded birds as nature's ingenious aircrafts; he filled his notebooks with sketches of their wings in motion.[3] M. C. Escher[4] was an avid reader of da Vinci's notebooks and shared his veneration for birds. Escher was charmed, as his son George noted, by "their movements, behavior, and the magic of their flight."[5] In one of his early woodcuts, *St. Francis Preaching to the Birds* (1922), Escher portrayed St. Francis's "little sisters" (as the saint called birds) with fanciful feathers and beaks, listening attentively to the saint's sermon.[6] Born in a small town near Milan, Caravaggio[7] was familiar with da Vinci's angels, and based the beautiful white wings of the angel in his painting, *The Inspiration of St. Matthew* (1602), on swan wings.[8] As these heavenly messengers are often depicted with bird wings, feathers have acquired attributes of guidance, support, encouragement, and otherworldliness. Hur joins the ranks of these great artists by exploring agents of flight as recurring themes in her art.

Hur's enamel brooches and pendants depicting bird feathers are part of an ongoing series called *Feathers of Memories*. The daughter of a farmer and granddaughter of an herbalist, Hur developed a bond with the South Korean

countryside where she was born and raised. Simple finds of nature, like feathers and flowers, seeds and stones, became her toys. The subject matter of her enamelwork draws on recollections of those joyful days. Watching birds and collecting feathers have been Hur's hobbies since childhood. These pursuits make her spirits soar and fill her with wonder. "As a child, I was fascinated by the outdoors, especially birds," she says. "Feathers represented my wonders about the places I had never been, things I never knew, and things I never have seen."[9] They seem embedded with messages for her. The images of feathers, seeds, sprouts, beans, and birds that appear in Hur's work reflect her experiences as a child. "They are grains of my spirit…and my works serve as containers of my thoughts," says Hur.[10] Many of her enamel pieces have broad titles, such as the pair of feather brooches titled *Reflection*, possibly serving as devices for introspection, with their analysis left open-ended.

Hur's love for handicrafts developed as a child, as she watched her mother do needlework. In high school she visited exhibitions by metalsmiths and jewelers in Seoul. An exhibit by Yoo Lizzy, Hur's professor at Seoul National University, influenced her the most and steered her toward studying metalsmithing and jewelry design.[11] Hur completed her BFA at the university in 1987. In August 1996, she moved to the United States to complete an MFA program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. There, professors Fred Fenster and Eleanor Moty strengthened her organizational skills and work ethic. Hur recollects, "Not only were they masters of techniques who demonstrated detailed processes in class, they also showed what professionalism really is." In August 1999, Hur joined the faculty at East Carolina University, where she continues to teach Metal Design.[12]

Hur's enamel pieces, painted delicately in shades of black and soft hues, depict feathers of different forms. Like bird feathers, which appear fragile but are tough, Hur's enameling technique of fusing glass to metal seems deceptively facile. In his fascinating study of bird feathers, author and artist Chris Maynard indicated how painstakingly birds groom their feathers using beaks and claws, much as we use combs and brushes on our hair.[13] Indeed, year after year, birds shed a few feathers and grow a few, similar to the way the human mind replaces stale notions with fresh ones. Like humans, birds adapt

The daughter of a farmer and granddaughter of an herbalist, Hur developed a bond with the South Korean countryside where she was born and raised.

"As a child, I was fascinated by the outdoors, especially birds. Feathers represented my wonders about the places I had never been, things I never knew, and things I never have seen."

Blue Moon 2, 2015
Vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver, stainless steel pin, star sapphire
1¾ x 2⅛ x ⅜ in.
Photo by the artist

to seasonal cycles. They use their feathers in myriad ways: to insulate themselves, attract mates, deceive prey, and to fly. Hur's multifarious feathers seem to equate nature's changing aspects with the mercurial human personality. They can also be interpreted as metaphors of opposing human tendencies: wanting to be careful on one hand, carefree on the other.

Of her enameling technique, Hur stresses that the image must be painted with enamel colors from light to dark, in thin brush lines because they tend to spread a little when fired, and certain colors like red and yellow burn out if overfired. It is important to know when to stop.[14] Her warning echoes that of the famous Greek painter of antiquity Apelles of Kos, who, Roman author Pliny the Elder recorded, knew "when to take his hand away from a painting."[15] This ability imparted an artistic grace to Apelles's paintings that no other painter could equal. All outstanding painters of the Renaissance were praised as "Apelles reborn." According to sixteenth-century Italian diplomat and author Baldassare Castiglione, who wrote *Il Cortegiano* (The Courtier), grace springs from *sprezzatura*, an unforced ease of accomplishment.[16] When applied to a painting, the word implies that all the labor that goes into creating an image should be concealed, so that it appears to be painted with fluent, easy brushstrokes. Hur's array of feathers seems effortlessly brushed, with a lightness of touch.

Flight, the most intriguing aspect of bird feathers, which motivated da Vinci to design flying gadgets centuries before the Wright brothers flew in 1903,[17] signifies the height of human achievement and pride in accomplishment. It also alludes to death because of hubris, as the Greek myth of Icarus tells us. Exhilarated by the experience of flying, Icarus ignored his father Daedalus's words of caution: "You must follow a course midway between earth and heaven."[18] He flew too close to the sun, which melted the wax that fastened the feathers of his wings, causing him to plunge to his death. Aware of the value of equilibrium, Hur named one of her pendants *Icarus*.

Hur's multifarious feathers seem to equate nature's changing aspects with the mercurial human personality.

They can also be interpreted as metaphors of opposing human tendencies: wanting to be careful on one hand, carefree on the other.

Above:
Blue Moon 5 and 6, 2015
Vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver, stainless steel pin
1¾ x 2½ x ⅜ in. (each)
Left brooch: Collection of the Enamel Arts Foundation
Photo by the artist

Left:
Spotted Feather 1 and 2, 2017
Vitreous enamel on copper, sterling silver, stainless steel pin
1½ x 1⅞ x ⅜ in. (left)
1¾ x 2¼ x ½ in. (right)
Photo by the artist

Icarus 3, 2015
Vitreous enamel on copper,
sterling silver, moonstone
1¾ x 2¾ x ¾ in.
5¼ in. diameter
Private collection
Photo by the artist

Feather Trace, 2015
Vitreous enamel on steel, sterling silver, stainless steel pin
2½ x 4 x ¼ in. (each)
Collection of the Enamel Arts Foundation
Photo by the artist

In a graduate class lecture at the time of her exhibition *Feather Trace*, Hur mentioned being moved by Aesop's fables.[19] Crows appear frequently in her enamel pieces: for example, the brooch titled *Lost Crow* depicts the bird with its feathers in disarray. This piece is reminiscent of Aesop's fable known as *The Bird in Borrowed Feathers*. A crow saw a group of peacocks proudly displaying their magnificent plumage and longed to be like them. So, the crow picked up a few of their feathers scattered on the ground and inserted them among its own. Then it flew to the clan of crows and scoffed at their ugly feathers. When the unsuccessfully disguised crow tried to join the peacocks, they recognized their stolen plumage, and angrily pulled it out, along with a few of the crow's own feathers. The bruised bird, now neither peacock nor crow, returned to the clan of crows, only to be further mistreated and shooed away. Several lessons can be drawn from this tale, such as "borrowed feathers do not make fine birds" and "borrowed feathers fool nobody."[20]

The crow also has an intelligent side, as revealed in another of Aesop's fables (as well as in fables around the world), *The Crow and the Pitcher*. A crow longing for a drink came across a pitcher with very little water. Lacking the strength to topple the pitcher, it hit upon an idea. By dropping pebbles one by one into the pitcher, the crow made the water level rise to the brim and quenched its thirst.[21] Indeed, one of Hur's pieces portrays a finely plumed crow with a pebble in its beak, titled *Feather Trace*.

Feathers of Memories by Mi-Sook Hur took me on a journey, enabling various associations and providing scope for more. Supple and resilient herself, like the birds that pique her curiosity, Hur's feather enamelings are imbued with a natural finesse. She also displays a playful side. In a pair of brooches, Hur painted half the feather on one brooch, the other half on another, to be worn, as she commented, by kindred spirits devoted to one another like lovebirds. As an art historian, to me the pair also hints at Hur's endeavor to unite her upbringing in the East with her professional growth in the West, and her determination to achieve recognition in both spheres.

The pair also hints at Hur's endeavor to unite her upbringing in the East with her professional growth in the West, and her determination to achieve recognition in both spheres.

Lost Crow (with detail), 2013
Plastic resin, sterling, steel, stainless steel, handmade paper
8 x 7½ x 1 in.
Photos by the artist

Punam Madhok is Associate Professor of Art History at East Carolina University. She received her PhD in Italian Renaissance and Baroque art (1993) and her MA in Chinese art (1986) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her BA in Art History (major) and Painting and Printmaking (minor) was completed at Kala Bhavan, Visva Bharati University, in Santiniketan, India (1983). She has presented papers at conferences, received grants to study works of art in Italy, Russia, Japan, Cambodia, and India, and has published articles on Asian, Renaissance, and Baroque art. Her drawings and paintings have been exhibited on campus and in juried shows.

1 Marilyn Stokstad and Michael Watt Cothren, *Art History*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc, 2018), 79; Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art through the Ages, A Global History*, 14th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Centage Learning, 2013), 80; Janell Broyles, *Egyptian Mythology* (New York, NY: Rosen Pub. Group, 2006), 31; Patrick Catel, *What did the Ancient Egyptians do for me?*, (Chicago, IL: Heinemann Library, 2011), 26. / **2** (1452-1519). / **3** Kathleen Krull, *Leonardo da Vinci* (New York, NY: Viking, 2005), 21. / **4** (1898-1972). / **5** David H. Steel, *The Worlds of M. C. Escher: Nature, Science, and Imagination* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Museum of Art, 2015), 51. / **6** Cited in *The Little Flowers of the Glorious Messer St. Francis and of His Friars* 2nd ed., trans. W. Heywood (London, UK: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1950), 42-43. Also see Steel, 50-51. / **7** (1571-1610). / **8** Harris, A. S., *Seventeenth-Century Art & Architecture* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008), 40-41. / **9** "Mi-Sook Hur," The Enamel Arts Foundation, accessed June 29, 2020, https://www.enamelarts.org/mi-sook-hur. / **10** Ibid. / **11** To learn more about Yoo Lizzy (b. 1945, Korea), refer to the following websites: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/buddha-ii-yoo-lizzy/ggFb30257UzWNQ and https://www.facebook.com/yoolizzymuseum/photos/yoo-lizzy-contemporary-metal-craft-archives-ii-funeral-ritesyoolizzy-craft-museu/3083964575010749 and http://ccba.kr/2017/08/24/yoo-lizzy-%EC%9C%A0%EB%A6%AC%EC%A7%80-2. Yoo Lizzi is the daughter of Yoo Youngkuk (1916-2002), a very well-known painter of Korea. For information on Yoo Youngkuk, refer to the website: https://www.mmca.go.kr/exhibitions/exhibitionsDetail.do?exhId=201603160000413. / **12** Hur has exhibited her work in the US and abroad, served as artist-in-residence, and conducted many workshops. For details, see "Mi-Sook Hur " East Carolina University, accessed June 29, 2020: https://art.ecu.edu/faculty-staff/mi-sook-hur. / **13** Chris Maynard, *FEATHERS: Form & Function* (New York, NY: Aviva Publishing, 2014). / **14** Hur describes her enameling technique in "Painted Buttons" in Linda Darty's *The Art of Enameling: Techniques, Projects, Inspiration*, 1st ed. (New York: Lark Books, 2004), 149-151. Hur's video demonstration of her enameling technique can be seen online: "Mi-Sook Hur: Painting with Enamel," https://vimeo.com/208055597; Mi-Sook Hur, "Painting with Enamels–with an Emphasis on Drawing" in Karen L. Cohen's *The Art of Fine Enameling*, 2nd ed. (Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2019), 220-228. / **15** J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Ancient Greece: Sources and Documents* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 159. / **16** Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), 67; John Rigby Hale, "Castiglione, Baldassare," *A Concise Encyclopaedia of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 73-74; Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2011), 464-466, 525. / **17** Krull, 110. / **18** Ovid, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. M. M. Innes (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1955), 184-185. / **19** Greek storyteller, ca. 620-564 BCE. / **20** Harold Jones, *Tales from Aesop* (New York, NY: Franklin Watts Inc., 1964); Anne Terry White, *Aesop's Fables*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1964), 40-41; John Cech, *Aesop's Fables* (New York, NY: Sterling, 2009), 6. / **21** Cech, 12; Carol Watson, *Aesop's Fables* (London, UK: Usborne Publishing Ltd, 2003), 11-15.

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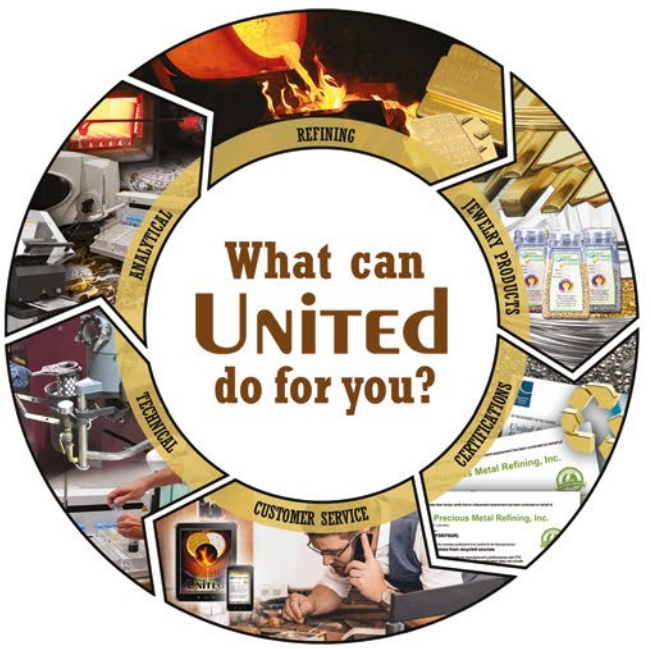

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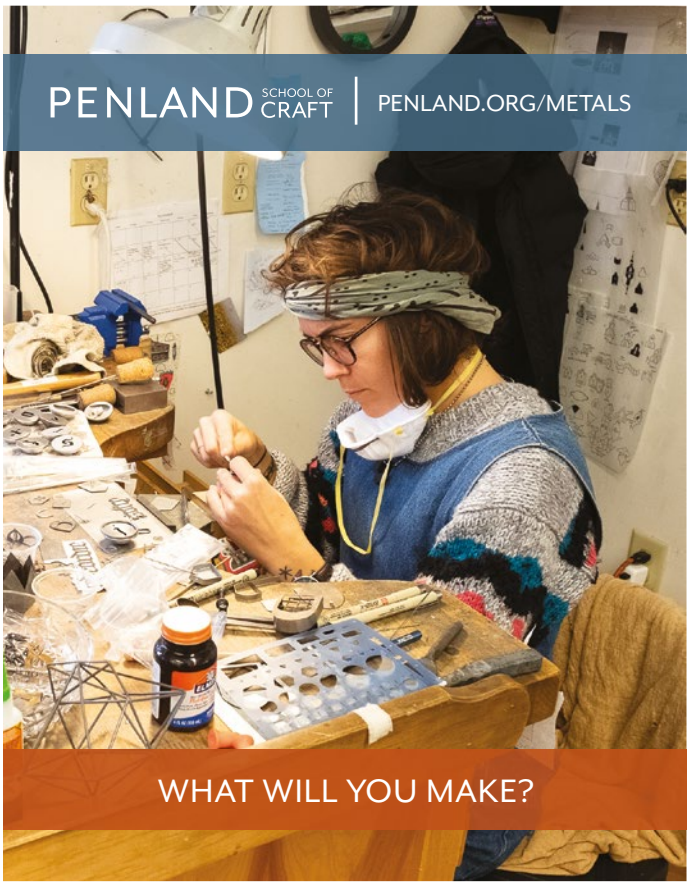

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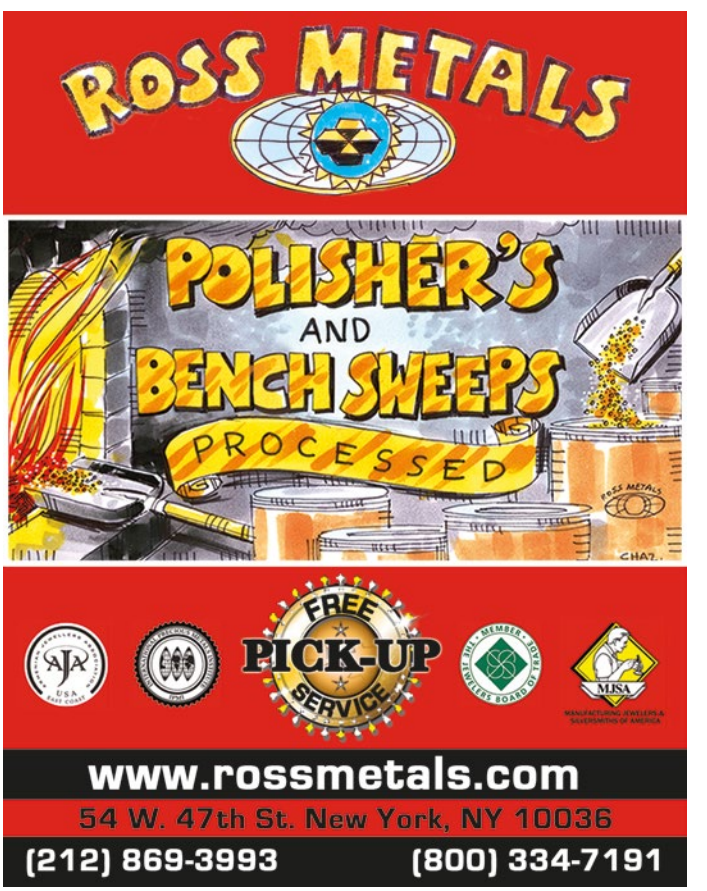

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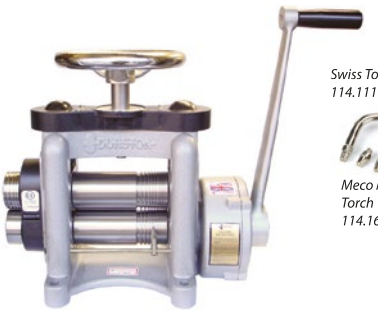

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